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*AS FOUND IN THE EVANGELISTS*

COMPARED WITH

PRESENT-DAY TEACHING.

BY

✓  
C. COLLINGWOOD, M.A. (OXON.).

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## P R E F A C E.

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TAKING into consideration the phase of religious feeling which prevails at the present day, the writer of the following Lectures has great hopes that they may prove useful to many, as offering views of great theological questions which will commend themselves to the rational support of many readers.

Freedom of thought and expression are the widespread characteristic of the age; and the Sacred Scriptures are held with a less firm grasp than was exercised by our fathers; while it has become the fashion even to let go many of the views not long since deemed essential to a sound belief. Education and inquiry have naturally made men less ready to accept, on authority, axioms at which their intelligence stumbles and is offended.

Hence the great desideratum is, a rational exposition and explanation of truths which have been for generations held as sacred, although too often inexplicable; truths which have in process of time become involved and entangled, and therefore more and more repulsive to the thoughtful inquirer; since they are presented as dogmas to be unquestioningly received in youth

—but only to be cast off as untenable by the mature and inquiring man.

The writer believes these essential truths to be misstated, in their popular form ; and to have fostered erroneous beliefs in the minds of numberless well-meaning persons, whose hearts and emotions they have chiefly touched ; but to have proved, moreover, highly unsatisfactory and unpalatable to such as cannot reconcile them with those God-given mental processes to which they naturally appeal as to a touch-stone for the verification of Truth. God, they may say, has not given as Truth that which not only cannot be approved by our mental faculties, but which is even repugnant to them. ‘Prove all things, and hold fast to that which is good,’ is the motto of the searching mind ; and to such minds the following essays are intended to appeal.

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# NEW STUDIES

IN

## CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.

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### LECTURE I.

#### THE GENEALOGIES OF OUR LORD.

‘So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations ; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations ; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.’—MATT. i. 17. (Compare also Luke iii. from verse 23 to end.)

MANY persons, although they might take up the New Testament with a sincere desire to become students of its precepts, and to draw from its pages all the wisdom and all the strength they were able, yet feel that the opening of the first chapter of Matthew is at least unpromising ; and they may, not unnaturally, experience but a very slight interest in reading what appears to be a mere string of *names*—names, too, which are, in other respects, to a certain extent unfamiliar. True, he will recognise some of the Old Testament appellations, under a changed orthography ; and there will be found, too, an interest in tracing the descent of our Lord, as to His Humanity, from the patriarchs of old. But even this laudable interest will perhaps receive a check when he perceives that the genealogy which he has so far considered is not the genealogy of Mary, the real mother of our Lord’s Humanity, but that of Joseph, who was the father of our Lord only in the sense of his being espoused to Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus.

But when, in the course of his reading, he arrives at the third chapter of *Luke's* gospel, he will find other complications, which will even still further modify the interest he has taken in the first genealogy by Matthew. For here, from the 23rd verse to the end of the chapter, he will read a still longer list of names, purporting to set forth the descent of Jesus (once more, be it observed, as the son of Joseph) from God Himself. And on comparing this genealogy with that presented by Matthew, we shall further discover what appears to be important discrepancies. In the first place, the genealogy as set forth by Matthew purports to trace our Lord's descent downwards, from Abraham, through David—'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.' But Luke writes in the precisely reverse order, and traces the pedigree of our Saviour upwards, through David, Abraham, and Adam, up to God Himself—'And Jesus Himself (he says, iii. 23) began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,' etc. And here again we cannot fail to notice two things: first, that besides tracing back the genealogy of our Lord from Abraham to God, there are also a great many more names mentioned by Luke as occurring between Jesus and David, than are included in Matthew's account; and second, that the names—forty-two in number—recorded by Luke, are altogether different from the smaller number of twenty-eight only, which occupy the same position in the genealogy according to Matthew.

Now these apparent discrepancies (and real difficulties on any of the ordinarily received methods of reading the Bible) would not be unlikely to act as stumbling-blocks to thoughtful minds, desirous to find consistency and truth in the Holy Word. But we should not bring them so prominently forward, did we not believe that they were capable of explanation and simplification; and not only of explanation, but also (as we might expect from the Word of God, which must be also the word of wisdom and truth) lessons of Divine instruction for



us ; which, if our minds are prepared to receive them, cannot fail to spring up within us, and bear fruit to spiritual life.

Those who see nothing in the Sacred Scriptures but the letter, who read the Bible as they would any ordinary book, the thoughts of whose writer lie upon its surface, will indeed find it difficult to discover spiritual truth, or even consistent literal meaning, in a long string of names such as those we are considering. But we are convinced that, besides the literal meaning, and within it, are enshrined higher truths ; and we wish to offer to our readers what appears to us to be the key to those truths, wherewith we may be able to unlock the casket, and apply to our minds the treasures of a lofty and spiritual character which it contains. With the aid of this key, then, we shall endeavour to unravel some of the difficulties presented by the apparently conflicting statements in the two genealogies, and hope to be able to show that they are not simply the meaningless catalogues which they would at first sight appear to be.

It may properly be remarked here, that *names* in the Bible, while they are necessary for the outward binding together, as it were, of the letter, are by no means the aimless concatenations of syllables which the majority of readers consider them. Taken simply and singly, they are comprehensible enough, and essential to narratives of events in which *persons* must of necessity take part ; but when we find whole chapters made up entirely of names, it becomes evident that there must be *something more* intended than a bald and unintelligible jargon of polysyllables. The names of the so-called antediluvian patriarchs cannot reasonably be regarded as distinctive of (real) individuals at all, but are apparently used to express spiritual things under personal appellations ; and are thus intended in the form of genealogies to illustrate the birth of one principle from another ; being therefore rather applicable to the states and qualities of epochs and dispensations than to individual persons. This is capable of abundant illustration.

Again, the names given from Noah to Heber (after which is called the Hebrew nation) are not, either, names of real persons,

but are significant appellations of real nations which formed the Church of that age. And later still, when real persons are indeed spoken of by their names, these names were applied, on account of their correspondent significations, to those earlier genealogies which we have observed to be of a spiritual and not a personal significance. And thus the whole system of names in the Word has a wonderful connection, a systematic and consistent agreement as to scope and meaning, whether they are applied to spiritual abstractions or to real historical personages; for spiritual generations in heaven and the Church are like the natural generations of earthly families, but they are in reality the arrangement of goods and truths, which are correspondent with, and according to, affinities and consanguinities.\*

Hence we may perceive that names, as far as regards their mere sound and orthography, are of no importance in the Bible. The more spiritual the mind which is brought to the perusal of the Scriptures, the more unimportant the names, regarded as names of individuals, become. Abraham, and Isaac, and Moses, and David need convey no *personal* meaning whatever, so long as they are understood as referring to those spiritual and celestial principles of which they are respectively significant. For what were Abraham, or Moses, or David, but men like ourselves? Men, it is true, who played a part on earth which was, under Providence, turned to account from a spiritual standpoint, to convey spiritual lessons to us, but otherwise of no greater account in the unseen world than hosts of other men as great and as good as they. And when we read these and similar names in the prophetic books, for example, apart from their acts, not person, but quality, should enter our thoughts—not the individual, but the spiritual essence.

That the genealogy of Luke continues to trace our Lord's descent above Abraham and through the antediluvian patriarchs, then, is proof that no mere natural pedigree is intended;

\* Thus the Jewish nation was often called *Israel* after the name originally given to Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 28): see Deut. vi. 4; Luke ii. 32, and *passim*. Many other names are so used by the Prophets; compare Psal. xiv. 7, lxxx. 1; Jer. xlix. 10; Isa. ix. 1, etc.

for we maintain that these at least are of purely spiritual significance, and were never intended to represent existent individuals, but only purely spiritual qualities and principles.

Nor is this the only reason which at once strikes the thoughtful reader, and shows him that there is something in these genealogies of more importance than that which at first sight appears ; but the fact that the descent of our Lord is traced through Joseph and not through Mary, seems at once to point out that something different from, and higher than, His mere natural genealogy is intended in the opening verses of Matthew ; and believing, as we do, that there exists a constant analogy between natural and spiritual things, we may be certain that in the description of the natural generations of Jesus Christ spiritual generations are referred to. The natural birth is but the type of the spiritual birth. Our Lord fully explained to Nicodemus this analogy when He said, 'Ye must be born again.' 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (John iii. 4, 6). And therefore, whenever we read in the Word of births and generations, an internal or spiritual reference is made to the new or *second* birth, and to the regenerate life. Our souls have to be born as well as our bodies, and the great principles of will and understanding develop themselves later ; and not until these have become established can the will and understanding beget sons and daughters—that is to say, *thoughts* and *affections*. And of these thoughts and affections, these goods and truths of the Spirit, there are generations succeeding generations, just as there are generations succeeding generations of the natural man. For regeneration can only be effected by successive degrees ; and just as a tree grows from a seed and passes through the various and successive stages of root, shoot, stem, branches, leaves, flowers, and lastly fruit, so regeneration, begun and pursued through its successive stages in this world, ultimately arrives at its perfection and fruition in that which is to come.

But it must be borne in mind that our Lord as to His Humanity was a Man in all respects like ourselves. 'For verily,

saith the Apostle (Hebrews ii. 16, 17), 'He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore, in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren.' And 'since God did descend, and since He is order itself, it was necessary, in order to His actually becoming a Man, that He should be born, educated, successively instructed in knowledge, and thus introduced by degrees to intelligence and wisdom. With respect, therefore, to the Humanity, He was an infant, like other infants—a child, like other children, and so forth; with this difference alone, that He more rapidly, more fully, and more perfectly than others accomplished the different stages of that progression; and that He thus advanced, according to order, is evident from these words in Luke (ii. 40, 52): "And the child (Jesus) grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." And again: "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."'

It follows, therefore, that as a man, from his birth onwards, must enter upon, and pass upwards through, all the stages of the regenerated life, so must our Lord, as to His Humanity, who 'was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin' (Heb. iv. 15), also have passed through similar stages—doubtless more rapidly, more fully, and more perfectly than others—yet no less certainly; to the effect that that Humanity, derived from His mother Mary, might be ultimately glorified, and finally united indissolubly with his Divinity, in one perfect Divine Humanity, 'who ever liveth to make intercession for us.' Were it not so, Christ would have been more, or less, than human—His Humanity would not have been according to order; and we should not then possess (as we know we do) 'a high priest, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.'

Every infant is born in a state of innocence, but with a strong hereditary tendency to sin and evil. 'The Lord first infuses into them the good of innocence, by virtue of which man is man.' In the early period of our lives, the Lord is at work

within us, making those spiritual preparations which are absolutely necessary for the inauguration of that which we ourselves have afterwards to do ; and without which, regeneration would be altogether impossible. And thus, during the first innocent years of life, the child is kept in conjunction with heaven. We all know the good and sweet impulses of children ; we all have had experience of the affectionate disposition they show towards those with whom they are chiefly brought into contact. We know the innocent love they have for mother, father, brothers, and sisters ; how easy it is to win their little hearts—how undisguised is their affection—how genuine their emotions ! We delight to observe their sympathy with misery and unhappiness in every form ; how their feelings of love and charity are excited by the tale of sorrow, or by the sight of real distress—how they are ever ready to relieve it—ever eager to listen to any story in which good springs from apparent evil—and how their vivid sympathies cause them to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep. So that, in fact, they are perfect mirrors of the happiness, or of the unhappiness, of those by whom they are surrounded. All this is because the young child is from earliest infancy to first boyhood or girlhood, in angelic association ; as our Lord says of such (in Matt. xviii. 10), ‘I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father, which is in heaven ;’ and thus infancy corresponds with the celestial state.

This is indeed the analogue, as it were, to the golden age—that time of our mundane existence when everything is bright, and fresh, and glorious, before the trail of the serpent has passed over it—before, that is, our sinful self-nature has begun violently to assert itself :

‘Our youth, our childhood, that spring of springs !’

as the poet calls it. Yes, childhood is a glimpse of heaven ! It is like little children, that each one must become before he can see the kingdom of heaven ; and Christ Himself has said, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them

not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' For why? they are in a celestial state—such as alone, of beings of earth, are capable of being conjoined with those whose home is in the highest heaven.

Hence, too, the stories which have been handed down to us concerning a *golden age* of the *world*—an age when man was innocent and good, when the gods walked on earth and conversed with men. These stories, common in ancient mythologies, are evidently based upon the fact that there was a time when mankind, in the aggregate, were like infants and young children as to worldly matters; that the first age of the human race in general, like the first age of the individual human being, was an age of innocence and happiness, bright, like gold, with the prevailing goods of love and truth, before the bane of sin stepped in, and in the guise of a serpent set up the monster *self* to be worshipped instead of God. This was the declension and downfall of the first or golden age of our race, and this is the curse upon which we all stumble, when, as we quit the innocent estate of childhood, the rational faculty begins to assume an independent sway.\*

But this innocence is not to last. It is by degrees put off, as hereditary evils declare themselves; man, by degrees, begins to know and learn, slowly at first; and although the good of innocence is removed, the good of ignorance takes its place. The boy or girl is still in a state of mutual charity; and, during the time of instruction, he is receiving simple truths, but without yet the power of reflecting upon them, and thus of appropriating them; so that he is not so liable to those temptations which arise when the fulness of knowledge succeeds. In this condition the boy or girl acquires the germ of the *spiritual* principle, which is love to the neighbour; and

\* It is worthy of remark that as by the doctrine of evolution it is argued that the embryonal stages of an animal indicate the stages of its ancestral descent; so also the totality of the life of an individual is an epitome of the history of the race. Thus we would submit that the innocent condition of childhood, even viewed by this test, points to an analogous, simple, and innocent form of society at the very commencement, now doubtless immeasurably distant, of man's life upon earth.—*See note, p. 61.*



thus the state of boyhood or girlhood, from the time of about ten years old, is correspondent to the spiritual condition.

In the third period of life, however, the goods of a man's precedent life undergo a change. He sees them in a new light, being now capable not only of receiving truths, but of meditating upon them, and confirming them; and thus good and truth mutually react on one another. Up to this time 'he has not (yet) *acquired* truths; the good things of innocence and charity which he had received in those two states have not yet been qualified; for truth gives quality to good, and good gives *essence* to truth; on which account he is from this age imbued with truths by instruction, and especially by his own thoughts, and consequent confirmations.' In this condition his state is correspondent to something lower than spiritual, and higher than natural. Now he has, instead of the good of ignorance, the good of intelligence; he has become rational, and has the supreme faculty of reflecting upon good and truth.

Thus we may perceive that the human soul in its growth in the world from infancy to adult age *descends*, as it were, through the heavenly series. It will hereafter become clear for what wise purpose this orderly series of states has to be passed through; and it will have become already evident that this earthly life is a condition of probation, in which we pass through certain stages of innocence and ignorance, and gradually put these off as we acquire strength of mind to imbibe truths, and, by experience and reflection, confirm them in life. Thus is the opportunity afforded us of bringing the two great faculties of will and understanding into accord, and thus we gain that great and invaluable blessing of experience, and are able to make an intelligent use of charity and love, which is the germ of the natural principle. Hence, too, we are subjected to temptations, those invaluable aids to spiritual life; for now begins that conflict between the inherent affections of evil and the intelligent appreciation of good, which must result in the victory of the one or the other, according as we seek

strength from above; 'for God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it' (1 Cor. x. 13).

Now, from what has already been said, it follows that our Lord—born into the world, made flesh, made like unto His brethren, made under the law—must in all respects have undergone the same conditions as those described as the natural progress and course of the human soul. He, too, was an infant, partaking with the human infant of the goods of innocence. He, too, was a youth, in whom, in their turn, were the spiritual goods of ignorance. He increased in wisdom and stature. He—the child Jesus—grew and waxed strong in spirit. He was introduced into states of celestial love, and afterwards into knowledge, like other men. He had to pass through all the degrees of preparation common to the rest of mankind, was subject to the necessities of acquiring knowledge, and liable to the same temptations as His brethren; the only difference being that He made all these acquisitions in greater fulness and perfection than others. He therefore, like us, descended as it were through all the heavenly series, and with the same end in view—or rather with a mighty end, foreshadowed only by our own spiritual career.

And this it is which is meant by the summing up of the genealogies which heads this Lecture; this is the spiritual lesson of 'the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.' 'So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David unto the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.'

It will be desirable here to make some remarks upon the remains or remnants of these celestial, spiritual, and natural states, through which we have said everyone passes in succession in his progress through life. For we have pointed out that they are assumed in a descending order; and when the



youth is endowed with the goods of ignorance, and is in mutual charity, he at the same time puts off the goods of infantile innocence ; while the second stage is in turn put off when the adult person arrives at the goods of intelligence, and becomes a rational confirmer of united good and truth. But although these anterior states are put off to make room for those succeeding, they are not entirely lost ; there are always some *remains* left in the heart, impressed upon the memory, and reserved there by the Lord, separated from the evils and falses of the natural self. Without such remains, man would not be man, nor could any regeneration take place ; for they are the bases of a new birth, mercifully provided in order that our fallen nature, left entirely to itself, might not altogether perish. They are ‘affections of good and truth in the internal man, by which the Lord flows in, and operates against the lusts and falsities of the external man ; good and truth stored up in the mind, from which he may draw when he is led by the Lord to repentance and reformation.’ For without such remains he would be dead—spiritually dead ; regeneration would be impossible, for there would be no ground to work upon, no germ to rouse into active vitality. ‘Except the Lord of Hosts’ (says the prophet Isaiah, i. 9) ‘had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah ;’ and unless such remnant of holy principles were left in every child of our fallen race, he could not turn to the Lord, nor receive any operating influence from Him.

So also, at the close of every dispensation, and at the consummation of every Church, a remnant or remainder is left to form the nucleus of a new Church ; just as the family of Noah were saved in the ark at the close of the first great dispensation, when the floods of evil and falsity overwhelmed all the rest of the world.

## LECTURE II.

THE GENEALOGIES OF OUR LORD (*continued*).

MATT. i. LUKE iii.

WE have thus endeavoured to point out certain principles relating to the progress of the human mind through the stages of innocence, ignorance, and subsequent intelligence, which accord with the growing development and activity of the body ; and we have shown that, as there are natural generations of father and son, continually repeated, so also are there spiritual generations of goods and truths, of celestial and spiritual qualities, arising from the marriage-union of goodness and truth, to which the human marriage-bond corresponds. This was necessary to the full elucidation and proper comprehension of our subject ; for not otherwise can we discern the true spiritual lessons which may be derived even from these unpromising catalogues of names, which are to the common reader, without Divine instruction, comparable indeed to the vision of bones seen by Ezekiel the prophet in the valley—‘and behold they were very dry.’

We may now perceive that the three series of generations of our Lord, from Abraham, are representative of his descent through the three heavenly series, and of the remains or remnants which He, in common with the human nature which He assumed, successively inherited. The first group corresponds to the celestial remains, from Abraham to David ; the second group to the spiritual remains, from David to the carrying away into Babylon ; and the third group to the natural remains from the carrying away into Babylon, downwards. It is said that each of these groups consisted of 14 generations ; but here we

see that the spiritual lesson is made of more importance than the letter, and the letter is adapted to the spiritual meaning ; for although the generations from Abraham to David are in agreement with those mentioned elsewhere, there are in the genealogy of Luke considerably more names enumerated between David and Jesus. Indeed, while in Matthew there are two series of 14, in Luke there are three times 14, making altogether 42 generations, instead of 28. Moreover, while in the second group (from David, in the 6th verse, to Jechonias, in the 11th verse) there are 14 generations, there are not 14 in the third group (from Jechonias to Jesus), unless Jechonias be twice included. Hence the time of carrying away to Babylon ends with Jechonias (in the 11th verse), and the time after they were brought to Babylon begins again with Jechonias (in the 12th verse); and thus the third group of 14 is completed.

But we thus have conveyed an important spiritual truth ; for while the division into three groups has reference to the three series of remains, already explained as resulting from conjunction with the celestial, spiritual, and ultimate heavens ; so the number 14, applied to each series, signifies the extreme holiness of the remains thus indicated. For the number 7 (and indeed all numbers compounded of sevens) indicates in an especial manner what is full and complete, and, above all, what is holy ; twice 7 having the same meaning in an even higher sense.

Another important truth is figured by the fact that while the second and third groups of names in the genealogy of Matthew differ entirely, both in numbers and character, from the genealogy of Luke, the first group agrees precisely with it, and also with the Old Testament account. It has been well shown by a revered friend of the writer's, now gone to his rest, and to whom he owes very much of what appears in these Lectures, that this no doubt points to a corresponding fact in regard to the regenerate. Only in celestial things, and in the celestial man, is there an exact correspondence between the essential and the formal, or between the internal and the external. This was

true, even of the Lord Himself, before He was fully glorified ; and especially during that period, and in that state to which the genealogy of Matthew relates. He acquired not only real, but also apparent truths ; these, however, as such, could not be appropriated as remains, and were therefore passed by, just as some persons were omitted in the genealogy. What was holy was extracted from the entire series, as the three times 14 were taken out of the whole of the Lord's progenitors. The genuine truths were, however, preserved, and were brought forth in the process of glorification, just as the persons omitted by Matthew reappear in the genealogy of Luke.

There are yet two points in the genealogy given by Matthew which are of extreme interest, since they give rise to considerations which prove that the underlying spiritual truths are of paramount importance, and far exceed any that can arise out of the acceptance of the letter. The first of these is the fact, already noted, that these genealogies are, after all, not carried to or from our Lord Himself by the line of His earthly mother, but through Joseph, who was not his father, but only espoused to Mary. But we must bear in mind that the woman is correspondent to the will and affection, the outcome of which is good, while the man represents the intellect and understanding, whence proceeds truth ; and these generations (which represent degrees in series, and are spiritual generations) spring from the truths of the understanding. These alone have that multiplicity which is represented by the distinctions of spiritual degrees. 'Good in itself is one and the same ; truths are many and various. Discriminations and distinctions, degrees and series, thus individualities and generations ; in one word, all multiplications are effected by truth. Joseph represented the intellectual principle of the Church, and therefore, though not actually the father of Jesus, our Lord's genealogy is traced through his line, to express spiritually what was true of the principle he represented.'

The other remarkable circumstance is the expression used throughout the genealogy of Matthew that Abraham *begat*

Isaac, and so on throughout—an expression not without meaning, for the remains of which these generations are representative are indeed implanted in the mind, but do not give rise to the birth of the spiritual life until regeneration is effected; when the seed so implanted is for the first time brought forth into actual life, and made to bear the fruits of repentance unto life by means of the new birth.

We may thus learn that in the genealogy recorded by Matthew there are very interesting and important spiritual lessons, applying primarily to the mysterious progress of the soul of our Lord in the flesh, through the successive stages by which He was introduced into states of celestial love, spiritual wisdom, and natural knowledge; and secondarily to our own progress through similar states, whereby we have been provided with a store of good and truth, which may serve as a bond between the fallen soul and God Himself. In our Lord these remains, however, were His acquisitions of celestial good, procured by combats and victories, and by which He continually united the human with the divine. They are not to be compared with the remains in man; for they were His own, and divine—divine goods and divine truths acquired to Himself by His own power; whereas these remains in man are merciful gifts from the Lord to aid conjunction with Him, and without which man would inevitably perish.

Let us now further illustrate this subject by some reference to the genealogy given by Luke in the third chapter of that gospel. Here we are at once struck by two facts: first, that it is given in the reverse order of descent; and secondly, that it traces our Lord's descent directly up to God. Besides this, we have already remarked the fact of there being many more names, and these different from the names given by Matthew. All these difficulties, however, so far from being insurmountable difficulties, as they might be upon the literal plan, in reality only confirm the spiritual meaning of those genealogies, as we will now proceed to show.

We have seen that man, from the innocence of infancy, has

descended through the heavens until he has arrived at the goods of intelligence, whereby he may be in a condition to meditate upon and confirm the truths of which he is a recipient, so as to conjoin them with good, and thus to perform uses, which may be brought forth into life. Whenever the remains we have spoken of, implanted at an earlier age in the soul (and which may be regarded as the good seed) are so disposed, by a man's turning towards God and seeking Divine assistance, they become vivified by the Divine heat and light, and that work is commenced which is the most important of all works, viz. Regeneration. When reformation has succeeded repentance, and regeneration in its turn has taken up the work begun by reformation, then the soul begins by laborious steps to climb upwards, and to return back again through the same stages by which it had first descended. The descent, by which the soul was instructed and stored with holy remains, was the work of the Lord; the ascent must be a man's own work, voluntarily performed, but at the same time solely by the co-operation of the Lord, who willingly gives His assistance to those who ask it. At our birth the natural mind is, in us, born to hereditary evil, and although it was stored by the Divine mercy with remains of celestial good and spiritual truth, it could not by nature be other, or higher in its degree, than the natural mind. Hence the descent begins, in Matthew, from Abraham; for Abraham, representing the third dispensation of the Church, was also representative of the natural degree of the mind; Noah corresponding to the spiritual and Adam to the celestial degrees. It is true that this one dispensation, from Abraham to Christ, has been itself divided into three periods, because, according to the laws of Divine order, although there are three degrees—the celestial, the spiritual, and the natural—yet all these successive degrees exist simultaneously in the lowest degree; that is, that these three degrees exist in every man's natural mind from his birth.

But in the reconstructive process, which takes place at regeneration, there is this difference: that the natural mind in



which we are born (but which possesses in it, as it were, the germs of the three degrees of natural, spiritual, and celestial) in this natural mind, the higher degrees are successively opened and developed as we ascend and progress in the regenerate state ; so that what was natural rises to what is spiritual, and what has become spiritual ascends to what is celestial ; and thus we become perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect ; that perfection being more or less complete, as our ultimate conjunction with God, the origin and beginning and end of all, is complete.

This genealogy of Luke, therefore, in respect to our Lord, is of peculiar significance. He took upon Him our nature and became flesh ; He descended, as we have seen, as man does, through the heavens, according to order ; but now we see that He who was human perfected His humanity and became divine. ‘Now He that ascended,’ says the Apostle, ‘what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things’ (Eph. iv. 9, 10). ‘What and if,’ our Lord exclaims to his murmuring disciples, ‘ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was *before*?’ ‘Ought not Christ,’ asks our risen Lord, ‘to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?’ (Luke xxiv. 26). Yes ; Christ by His sufferings and temptations, His conflicts and His victories, ascended up, emphatically where he was before ; his human nature, purified and refined, rose higher, and became more and more transcendently perfect. He rose not only from the natural, through the spiritual and the celestial degrees, but He, and He alone of men, attained to what was Divine. From being a son of Adam, He finally became in its highest, its fullest, and its most internal sense, the Son of God : ‘Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father—and to My God, and your God’ (John xx. 17).

There is yet another point, no less interesting than instructive, to be referred to in considering the genealogy of Luke.

It cannot fail to be remarked that the names enumerated between those of Jesus Himself and David are not only more numerous than, but also entirely different from the corresponding group, recorded by Matthew. The literal discrepancy is here so marked that we cannot avoid perceiving that it has been the result of a definite and deliberate purpose—a purpose whose object has been to exalt the spiritual sense, and afford a valuable and instructive spiritual lesson. In Matthew ii. 12 we read that the wise men who had been led by a star in the east to the child Jesus, ‘being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.’ The way here means truth. ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life,’ says Christ to us; and the Psalmist beautifully brings out the same idea in the 5th and 6th verses of the xxvth Psalm: ‘Show me Thy *ways*, O Lord; teach me Thy *paths*. Lead me in Thy *truth*, and teach me.’ There is, however, a truth which leads us to good, and a truth to which good leads us; the first is more simple than the last; the one preceding charity, the other following and arising out of it. By the first way the wise men were led to the feet of Jesus, who is Truth itself; but having arrived there, and having thus acquired the good of truth, they would next advance to the truth of *good*, learnt by instruction and intelligence, and confirmed by temptation and conflict. The perception of truth is approached by a downward progression—the reception of good is attained by an upward advance—not precisely the reverse of the first, nor tending to the same point; the first progress being the outcome or birth of divinely-implanted first principles—the second, by the rational confirmation of them in the mind, and their active participation in life. Thus we return to our own country another way, and this is what is signified by the variation of the series of the ascending genealogy of Luke, from the descending generations enumerated by Matthew. And this difference was even more conspicuous in the case of our Lord’s earthly career, although it applies both to our regenerate progress and His glorified state; for his glorification was in an infinite



degree greater and higher than our regeneration ; and the steps by which it was effected were of a correspondingly grander character ; though, as we have already seen, there is a parallelism and correspondence between His career and that of man ; what was infinite and transcendent in Him being but finite and dependent in us.

This perfection and transcendency is additionally illustrated when we penetrate further into the spiritual signification of the generations in Luke. We have already pointed out that the three groups of fourteen which have been so often mentioned, signified perfection and holiness.

The numbers of the generations mentioned by Luke, however (although not referred to as numbers) are singularly significant. From Jesus to David are forty-two generations—a number signifying the full duration of temptations from beginning to end. From David to Abraham there are fourteen generations (on the meaning of which we have already dwelt), and from Abraham up to God are twenty-one generations, the number twenty-one denoting a holy state, and specifically the end or completion of this holy state. All these numbers added together amount to seventy-seven, a number which represents what is holy and inviolable in the highest degree ; and this ascending series doubtless is intended to prefigure our Lord's ascending states to glorification, which He illustrated by His baptism, His transfiguration, and His resurrection and ascension ; and in a secondary sense, the progress of the regenerate man from the natural, through the spiritual, to the celestial degrees.

With regard to the difference which appears in the lists given by Matthew and those of Luke between Joseph and David, seeing how all-important is the spiritual sense, we might be inclined to think it unimportant to understand its literal meaning. An explanation however may be given. We read in the 12th of Mark, 18th and 19th verses, 'Then came unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection ; and they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife and raise up seed unto his

brother.' Now if we suppose that the parents of Joseph were examples of the working of this Mosaic law, the actual father of Joseph may have been the second husband of his mother, whereas the *first* husband would have been the *legal* father. If, therefore the line is traced in the one instance through the actual father, and in the other instance through the legal father, they would be, in the two instances, entirely different; and hence the conflicting genealogies of Matthew and Luke may be explained. Our Lord also had a legal father, who was *Joseph*, while His actual father was God, though His descent is traced in the former line.

Space will not permit us to dwell further upon these subjects, which have been treated but briefly in order to compress them within the limits of a Lecture; but enough has been said to exhibit the deep interest of the internal sense of the Scriptures, and its wondrous and many-sided application to our state. Herein we find guidance and support in all our difficulties, and wisdom and knowledge sufficient to direct us through every step of the regenerate life. 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them' (John xiii. 17). Let us then be thankful that we have the blessing of a spiritual insight into the Word, and can there read within the letter, the spirit which animates it. 'For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life' (2 Cor. iii. 6). 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life' (John vi. 63).

By such examinations, guided by the Holy Spirit, we may under Divine blessing, become well assured of the certainty, wisdom, and the truth of those words addressed by the Apostle Paul to Timothy (2 Tim. iii. 14-17), 'But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them. And that, from a child, thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.'

'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; and that the man of God may be *perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' (2 Tim. iii. 16).

## LECTURE III.

### THE FORERUNNER.

‘As it is written in the Prophets, Behold I send My messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee ; The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.’  
—MARK i. 2, 3.

WE have but to turn back a few pages of the Bible to find the prophet from whom this prediction is taken. It was Malachi, the last connecting link between the Old Covenant and the New, who was called upon to denounce the fearful condition of Israel as to faith and goodness, in those days when these were at their lowest ebb, and absolutely more deficient than they had been in any age since the creation of mankind. For now had arrived that critical condition of the human race when all the providence of God seemed to be of none effect ; when all the various modes in which He had attempted to effect the salvation of mankind had apparently miscarried ; and when there did not appear (humanly speaking) to be any further hope of man’s restoration to his original position as a recipient and a reciprocator of the love and wisdom of his Creator.

The prophet has nothing good to say to Israel. He comes not with commendation on his lips ; no ‘well done, good and faithful servant !’ is heard or expected by the people who have for generation after generation become more and more irreligious, more and more ungrateful, more and more unspiritual, more and more profane. But he upbraids them in the name of the Lord ; he sets before them their gross iniquities in plain and severe language ; he reproves them in burning words ; he

denounces their accumulated sins ; and he threatens impending and fearful judgment.

If, indeed, the people of Israel had been the servants of a harsh and unyielding master, the subjects of a domineering and implacable king, sore indeed would have been their plight in this terrible time, when it might be supposed that all patience had been exhausted, all mercy forfeited, and nought remained but the exercise of that signal vengeance which power and will alike might 'be expected to combine to drive home upon an utterly depraved and contemptible people. Where was the champion who should defend them in this strait ? Where was the Gideon, the Samson, the David, who should beard the enraged, the slighted, the insulted Lord to whom they owed so much ; the Destroyer of the Amorites, the Overthrower of the hosts of Pharaoh, the Vanquisher of the powers of the Philistines and the Assyrians ?

No, they were left to themselves ; they had broken their faith ; they had abused their promises ; they had forfeited the protection of Him who had said to their great forefather, 'Fear not, Abraham, for I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward' (Gen. xv. 1) ; and why should they not, without further respite, be swept in vengeance from off the face of the earth ?

And yet they *had* a champion more powerful than Gideon, than Samson, or than David ; a champion more sure and more faithful as well as more mighty than these. For this offended God, who, by His prophet Malachi, denounces His recreant people, prefaces His denunciation with this all-consoling sentence, 'I have *loved* you, saith the Lord' (i. 2) ; and not only I *have* loved you, by which it might be implied that He loved them no longer, but further on in the prophecy, in the midst of His stern reproofs, he says (iii. 6) : 'For I am the Lord, I change not, *therefore* ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' And it was indeed in fulfilment of His declaration that He loved them, that He was now making use of His prophet Malachi as the agent of His reproofs, and stern, but necessary, rebukes, to the end that He might inaugurate a great

event—the greatest event in human history—by which He should for ever vindicate His own goodness and truth, and His claim to be the unchangeable lover of His faithless and backsliding people.

For the prophecy of Malachi has two distinct aims ; first, a denunciation of wickedness and profanity, a final and crushing woe, by which the Divine protest against evil and falsity should make itself unmistakably heard ; by which the never-ceasing and accumulated ill-doing of the children of Israel should through all coming time, be held up to their posterity as a shame and a reproach, which had merited at the hands of a just God the punishment of extinction. But also, secondly, a gracious promise of God's continued love and protection ; a yearning pledge that, undaunted by the ill-success of all His long-suffering and goodness to them for ages past, He would not even now wholly give them up to destruction ; and not only so, but that He would invent new schemes of redemption even more gracious than the past ; new plans of salvation passing man's knowledge and understanding, and exhibiting far greater love than anything which had gone before ; new messages of mercy, in which He implied that while previous ones had apparently failed of their effect, these should be so framed by Divine love and Divine wisdom that they could not go astray, but must accomplish that for which He sent them.

‘The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in : Behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts !’ (Mal. iii. 1.) Here was the promise. Well the Jews knew what it implied ! Messiah had long been expected. That ‘the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent,’ was a promise which the Rabbis held sacred, and in their deepest heart. That Shiloh should come, according to the prophetic utterances of the dying Jacob, was the faith of Israel ; and when the time came that prophets were few and far between, when the intercourse between Jehovah and His people became more and more constrained and more and more uncertain, then did the

devouter Jews look with greater longing for that Messiah who should tell them all things. And here He was promised in much the same language as, three hundred years before, the prophet Isaiah had foretold Him ; in almost the same words as Haggai also had used about half that time previously. The Desire of all Nations was at hand ; and the glory of the latter house should be greater than of the former ; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts (Hag. ii. 6, 8). It was impossible to mistake the reiterated predictions of the prophets. The Sun of Righteousness was to arise with healing on His wings. The great and terrible day of the Lord was at hand. The mercy of the Lord would soon receive its seal in the accomplishment of His promises, and the long-suffering and love of Jehovah would soon be vindicated by the appearance of the Messenger of the Covenant in the Temple of the Lord.

But this was not all. To the Jews the appearance of a Deliverer seemed a thing which they could easily endure ; they surely could receive a Saviour with equanimity, or at least with fearlessness, as One who came to save ; not to reckon with them for their past offences, but to wipe clean the record, and to save them from present punishment and future wrong. What could be more simple than that a great champion, such as in the early days of Jewish theocracy was more than once raised up in the hour of their need, should again appear in their forefront, to chastise the barbarians who had carried them captive, to rebuild the desecrated temple, to restore Jerusalem, the city of God and of peace, to its olden splendour, and to raise the people of Israel to more than the renown and glory of the days of David and Solomon ?

How little they recked of *Who* it was who should come, of what was the nature and character of the messenger of the Covenant ; how little they comprehended the mission of Him who, when He came, announced with grand simplicity, ‘ My kingdom is not of this world ! ’ How utterly they mistook the promises of God ; and how profoundly must they have been



puzzled by the fearful character of that advent, of which it was said immediately after the promise, 'But who may abide the day of His coming!' Here, indeed, was a grand mystery! For what saith the prophet? 'But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver.' And again: 'For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch' (Mal. iv. 1).

Yes, this would be the dread appearance of One who, *thought* He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, yet being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God (2 Phil. vi. 7). For in that humble guise, without form or comeliness, He came; and when they saw Him, there was no beauty in Him that they should desire Him; for they saw not the spiritual perfection, the beauty of holiness. They knew not, nor could they be persuaded, that in that lowly carpenter's son could be the Refiner of Israel, who was to purify the sons of Levi. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Only a chosen few, in whom were *remains* of goodness and truth, of grace and faith, were capable of being stirred up by the preaching of repentance. As He said of His second coming, so could it be asked of His first, 'When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith upon the earth?' x

But this grand difficulty, insuperable to a finite understanding, was compassed in the Providence of God, who would not leave His people in doubt. Of faith there might be little, but there was sufficient for His purposes; the smoking flax He had not quenched, and He could fan it into a fire which might warm the cold heart of man, and lighten his dull understanding; so that hereafter, in the fulness of time, it should leaven the world, and become the fit tabernacle of His Church on

earth. But the Refiner must not come unannounced ; the day that should burn as an oven must be so ushered in that those who feared the name of God should be able to recognize the Sun of Righteousness when He arose. Else would *all* be burnt up like stubble ; else could none abide the day of His coming ; else would all Israel be consumed ; else would the coming of the incarnate God only smite the earth with an irremediable *curse*.

Therefore, in prospect of that great and terrible day of the Lord, did He promise that He would send Elijah the prophet. Not Elijah in person ; the aged prophet was dead ; he had run his course, he had fought his fight ; and none ever returned to earth who had once quitted it ; but as the angel of the Lord spake to Zacharias at the altar concerning his future son, ‘ He shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias ’ (using the very words of Malachi), ‘ to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient by the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people *prepared* for the Lord ’ (Luke i. 17).

‘ Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me,’ said the Lord, by the prophet Malachi (iii. 1) ; and our Saviour, addressing His disciples in Matthew (xi. 11-14), says, ‘ Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist . . . And if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come.’ ‘ Why say the Scribes ’ (asked the disciples, unlearned in the Prophets, with whose writings the Scribes were supposed to be professionally acquainted), ‘ why say the Scribes that Elias must first come ? And He answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first and restoreth all things. . . . But I say unto you, that Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him what they listed ’ (Mark ix. 11).

The mission of him, therefore, who was to come in the spirit and power of Elias, was to be the messenger of the Lord, the forerunner of the new covenant, the restorer of all things. He was to preach repentance as the first step towards awakening the dormant hearts of mankind, that they might be capable of



receiving Him who was shortly to come as a Refiner and Purifier, who was the Lord our Righteousness, Holiness unto the Lord. No bond could be established between God and His creatures unless there was some holiness, some righteousness in man, to unite him with the holy and righteous God ; and 'John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness, saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins' (Matt. iii. 6). We need not ask if all were sincere. It is sufficient that some were ; and those who truly confessed their sins, and repented and were baptized, such formed the remnant of whom the prophet Joel spake (ii. 32) : 'And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered ; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.'

But the quotation of St. Mark is from the Prophets ; and another prophet (Isaiah) adds his testimony to that of Malachi. In the 40th chapter we read it : 'The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord ; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.' Prepare ye the way of the Lord ! This might be deemed sufficient by those who do not enter into the spirit of the Divine writing ; it might be thought superfluous to make straight his path in the desert. But herein is that duality of expression which is a characteristic of the Word of God. Herein is that seal which stamps the genuineness of Scripture. Repent, and believe ; this is the warning, this the adjuration. Repent, and confess your sins unto newness of life. Cease to do evil, and learn to do well ; let your heart be touched with the consciousness of sin and the necessity of new birth ; let the stubborn will be bent from following in the way of evil, and then is the way of God prepared. Then can He enter the cleansed heart, and kindle the fire of love upon the newly-consecrated altar. Then can the well-inclined and voluntarily-affected *will* be placed freely at

the disposal of the Lord, to do with it as He lists. The way of the Lord is prepared. But that is not all ; His path must be straight ; the understanding must be in accord with the will ; not only the heart, but the intellect also must be conquered ; man must abjure error and falsity, and truth and faith must illuminate the mind as love and goodness have already enkindled and warmed the heart. Then, and then only, is the way of the Lord prepared, and *also* His path is made straight ; and by this combination of heart and soul, this accord of will and understanding in the interests and acknowledgment of goodness and truth, is God enthroned in man, and the kingdom of heaven brought near to every one. ‘Repent, then,’ said the Baptist, ‘for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Christ, by His nearness, was bringing it to man, and man was implored to meet Him by preparing his heart and mind by the appointed means for that reception of goodness and truth which is the realization of the heavenly state.

And thus was the Providence of God vindicated, and Baptism, as the representative and correspondent of the purifying process, established, by means of which mankind was so surrounded by heavenly influences that the Church of Christ could find congenial soil, and ‘that great and dreadful day of the Lord’ became the day of man’s long looked for deliverance, the day of his firmly-founded and ever-advancing salvation, instead of being (as it would otherwise have been) the day on which He might have come to ‘smite the earth with a curse.’

## LECTURE IV.

### ‘GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST.’

‘And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.’—LUKE ii. 13, 14.

SUCH is the angelic refrain which burst upon the shepherds of Bethlehem on the announcement of the birth of a Saviour which is Christ the Lord ! Such is the covenant declared from God to man, by hosts of ministering spirits, as soon as the first great step was accomplished, and an incarnate Jehovah lay, a wailing infant, in a manger, in the city of David.

Those were days of darkness and ignorance—neither intelligence nor spiritual-mindedness were to be found ; the people had hardened their hearts, the priests imposed heavy burdens, the prophets were not, and God had seemed to have ceased to visit His people. A great darkness covered all the land ; every man, while professing to keep the letter, evaded the spirit of the law, and did that which was right in his own eyes ; belief and faith were at their lowest ebb, and to any thoughtful mind the condition of mankind, and more especially of God’s chosen people, was evil in the extreme—nay, almost hopeless. But the darkest hour is before the dawn, and when we seem to be almost overwhelmed with the shadow of misfortune, it sometimes happens that light is beginning to break through the thick clouds, a light which is destined to shine more and more unto the perfect day.

So now a light had appeared—a star in the east had shed a lustrous and prophetic ray—the Star which should come out of

Jacob ; a star in the dawn, which should brighten and ever increase in radiance until it should outshine the sun of this world, and should irradiate every soul with the beams of the Sun of Heaven. And thus was the star announced and welcomed by the angelic host, proclaimed by heaven to earth as 'Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. Glory to God in the highest ; on earth peace, goodwill towards men !'

Thus was the birth of Christ proclaimed ! the great meeting-point between God and man : Glory to God, and peace to man. God and man were thus placed, once and for all, upon terms of inalienable mutual confidence and goodwill. God descended from His heavenly state, and, in so doing, raised up man to His own plane, as it were—a plane on and above which was God, and on and below which was man ; a plane upon which both could meet and speak (if we may so say), face to face, as God spoke with Adam, walking in the garden, in the cool of the day.

We have not far to search in the book which we know to be the Revelation of Himself by God to His creatures, in order to discover that its key-note is an event to take place at a time, once long future, but which, with the continuance of the record, became nearer and even nearer. The very first chapters tell briefly of man's earliest estate, which, if in the nature of things it could have endured, would have rendered unnecessary that great sacrifice which He foresaw and foreshadowed from the first. Briefly, indeed, is man's earliest history scanned by the Bible story ; his innocence, his temptations, his fall, are all only simply stated, and in the letter alone give but little clue to all these great spiritual cataclysms which must have been the tale of ages ; of the slow declension, the sure demoralization, which ensued from the gradual insinuation of the poisonous wisdom of the serpent into the plastic soul, which came pure from the breath of his Maker. The spiritual underlying sense of the Word gives the key to the enigma which has puzzled the wisdom of the sages and exercised the faculties of the philosophers of all ages, 'Whence and wherefore, *evil* ?'

And with the declaration of the disease is simultaneously proclaimed the discovery and the advent of the remedy. The curse which fell upon sin was simultaneously accompanied by the promise of an antidote : 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed : *it* shall bruise thy head, and *thou* shalt bruise his heel.' From that time forth no prophet but has foretold, by superhuman prescience, the advent of a divine Saviour ; no seer but has, with piercing vision down the vista of ages, discerned the God-like form of a coming Messiah ; no inspired singer but has chosen as his most favourite theme the deliverance of his race from the thralldom of evil by a long-promised, yet surely to be fulfilled, Redeemer of mankind ; and prophet, singer, and seer alike vie with one another in their ascription of glory, of dignity, of might, of honour, of power, and of majesty to Him who should, as the fulfilment of the counsels of Jehovah, thus come—to Him who, in the fulness of time, did come—Christ, the Holy One, the Saviour of the world.

But when the shepherds of Bethlehem—simple souls, keeping watch over their flocks by night—were forewarned by an angelic vision of the divine babe lying hard by, in a manger, not the glory of the Lord which shone upon them, not the multitudinous voices of the seraphic choir, nor the new and angelic gospel proclaimed from heaven itself, could realize to them that that wailing Infant was the 'Salvation prepared before the face of all people ; the Light to lighten the Gentiles ; the glory of God's people, Israel.' A few, like Elizabeth and Mary, and Zacharias and Simeon and Anna, when they were filled with the Holy Ghost, saw clearly, and recognized in their exalted condition, the true nature of Him who was just opening His new-born eyes to the light of this nether world. But none else, less favoured, and to whom less than divine inspiration was granted—none else, without long education, long trial, long-suffering experience, were able to identify the Babe of Bethlehem with Him whom the rapt Isaiah characterized by the names of Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the

everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Even the disciples, those who followed His footsteps by the waters of the lake, who heard His teaching in the synagogue and on the sea-shore, who were eye-witnesses of the blamelessness of His sinless life, who felt the wondrousness of His superhuman wisdom, who left all to follow Him—not even those could realize Him as the Sun of Righteousness, the bright and morning Star ; not, that is, until He had ascended out of their sight, until He had returned to where He was before ; until, from the throne of the Majesty on high, He could send His Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth, and to open their minds to perceive that the Scriptures had been at last fulfilled. And it is only from St. John that we fully learn that the divinely begotten Son of the Virgin of Nazareth was no other than ‘the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending—which is, and which was, and which is to come—the Almighty.’

From the very first it will be seen that Christ was to be of the seed of the woman. The mystery of the Incarnation is a mystery as to which we may attain a dim perception through the medium of truths only now beginning to find acceptance, a mystery which is otherwise impenetrable and inconceivable. Christ, to be a man, must be born of a woman ; to partake of our human nature, He must make His entrance upon this material world by the way prescribed to the human race. To become a man, He must partake of the nature, including the frailties of men. No half measure could have effected that which had become necessary from the lost condition of the human race. God, as a Spirit, could hold no direct communion with souls which had become dead to spiritual things, whose avenues of spiritual life had become totally darkened and obliterated. For man, without God, is dead, past restoration ; and the whole human race was in this predicament. It is as though a king saw his whole nation on the brink of destruction, and was powerless to save them except by some last resource, some ultimate expedient, which was only possible when everything else conceivable had absolutely and entirely failed. But God,



who had created the universe, and Man as its crown and cornerstone, could not, in virtue of His own Divine order, leave him to perish unassisted. For the crisis was not unanticipated, but foreseen in the Divine Providence from the very beginning of time, and, as we have seen, already provided for, when none but the All-knowing could have conceived of its necessity. Therefore were all things pre-arranged, and He who had declared of Himself, 'I am the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour' (Isa. xliii. 3), was prepared to offer Himself as the necessary sacrifice, to step down from His throne of power and become the suffering Man; to live the toiling and anxious life of a man of the people; to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; to be 'more marred than any man' (Isa. lii. 14); and all for the one object, that He might renew the race of mankind, restore them to their ancient and natural estate, and be for ever a Mediator between God and man—an appeal from His Manhood to His Godhead—a High Priest, capable of being 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities' (Heb. iv. 15).

But no mere *man* could do all this. No one of the great and inspired prophets or sages of old could have soared above the plane of earth, to which he was bound by the ties of his birth from earthly parents—none of these could have been free from the infirmities of earth. Who of these was, or could be, sinless? Who of these could even be other than derivatively holy? Who of these could have been a Saviour?

But the Babe of Bethlehem, born of a human mother, and thus setting foot upon the earth as a citizen, with all the rights to earth, all the privileges of citizenship possessed by the sons of the dust, had yet no human father; and hence was He not only of this world—was human, but something more. We know whence cometh the earthly body—we know whence, as babes, we derive sustenance; but who can tell whence cometh the soul that animates us? the spirit which makes the material form instinct with life, with growing intelligence, with desire of good, of wisdom, of immortality? So may we ask of Him that was heralded by the angels—Whence came He? How was He

related to the Jehovah of the old covenant? What spirit animated that mysterious form? And to these questions we find a distinct and categorical answer in the 1st chapter of St. Luke, 35th verse, when the Angel of Annunciation declares to the Virgin, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; *therefore* also that *Holy Thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the *Son of God*.' 'Which things,' saith the Apostle, 'the angels desire to look into;' which things, too, we may infer some of the angels at least were entrusted with; and hence that angel of the Lord, filled with His Spirit as His mouthpiece to man—that angelic host whose voices were heard by the dazzled shepherds, sang, 'Glory to God in the Highest!' Glory to Him for the fulfilment of His Providence—for the accomplishment of His designs of love for His lost creatures—for the infinite condescension which cradled in an earthly form the Divine Infant, which was to save His people from their sins—for the sacrifice which was to entail sorrow, grief, suffering, and death upon the King of all, the dweller in light unapproachable, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, but who, of His own free will, unprompted by any power save that of love and pity, 'made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross' (Phil. ii. 7, 8). Well might the angels, the multitude of the heavenly host, sing their celestial pæan:

'GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST!'

But this mysterious birth, which is to end in an ignominious death, and is the fulfilment of the high counsel of Jehovah, must be of vast importance to *us*, must exercise an extraordinary and an immediate influence upon the fortunes of mankind. How, then, is this effected, so that the astounding sacrifice and wonderful condescension of God may not only not *fail* of its object (which is inconceivable), but may redound



to His glory, and to the good of those whom it was intended to benefit? Thus, then :—Christ was born into the world in order that the principles which He represents may be born in *us* ; for it was the absence, the death of those principles in us, which had extinguished man's spirituality, and made us, as a race, dead in trespasses and sins. One by one all the original principles of holiness implanted in us had lost their hold upon our hearts ; little by little all the purity and innocence in which man was created had deserted him, and in their place had crept in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. By slow yet ever hastening steps, the soul of man had declined from its first high estate, until what was once a fair, unspotted paradise had become 'a habitation for dragons and a court for owls.' 'Thorns have come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof' (Isa. xxxiv. 13). It was to restore this ruin that Christ was born, to repair this desolation :—1st, by becoming a medium between His Godhead and His Manhood, whereby all things in heaven and earth are brought into harmonious relation and action :—2nd, by giving new life and vivifying energy to those remains of goodness and truth, of which man is never left altogether destitute, so that he may have a basis upon which to build a new superstructure, upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord :—3rd, by giving us a living example of humility, of forbearance, of suffering, of godliness, and true holiness, and of every virtue found in the teaching of the Gospel ; so that we may see and feel that it is our duty to follow Him in all things, and thus to attain as near as possible to the high standard which He has demonstrated as the practicable ideal of the human soul ; because Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth :—and lastly, that, by partaking our human nature, He might conjoin it with His own Divine nature, and thus become, once for all, the

Mediator between God and man, a High Priest—not one who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

These, in brief, are the great benefits whereof mankind are partakers in His birth—a restoration, a remoulding, a renovation, an exaltation, a salvation. Thus might the angels well and truly sing :—

Henceforth 'PEACE ON EARTH, AND GOODWILL TOWARDS MEN !'

But some may say, Where is this peace? and who can tell of this goodwill? Do we not still see nation fighting against nation, people against people, brother against brother, and friend against friend? Where is this peace to be found? Do we not see around us, where goodwill should abound, many things the reverse of this—uncharitableness, falseness, treachery, ingratitude, revenge, men requiting evil for evil, or even evil for good? Alas! all this we see—too clearly. But do we not also see brotherly love, true charity, mutual kindness, unselfish affection, unsparing benevolence, long-suffering, forgiveness, gentleness, meekness, and undying faith? God be praised, these we also see; and such a leaven working in the whole lump of humanity as has never been seen or felt before for thousands of years. Yes; Christ's example is not lost; the dowry of peace on earth and goodwill towards men, which was sung by the multitudes of the heavenly host on the first Christmas morn, has endowed, and will continue for ever increasingly to endow, humanity with those qualities which will render it more and more fit for companionship with the angelic hosts whose tongues first proclaimed it as the promise of the coming Christ. For there is peace on earth—the *peace* of a good conscience, void of offence towards God and towards man; '*peace* to every man that worketh good' (Rom. ii. 10); *peace*, where it has met with righteousness and kissed it; *peace* in the paths of true wisdom (Prov. iii. 17); *peace* to all those who follow the things which make for peace (Rom. xiv. 19); *peace* to those that be spiritually minded (Rom. viii. 6); *peace*

to those that enjoy the fruits of the Spirit ; *peace* to all such as whose feet are ‘shod with the preparation of the *Gospel of Peace*’ (Eph. vi. 15).

It is worthy of remark, indeed it would be wrong to omit it, that the revised edition of the New Testament reads this passage somewhat differently from that with which we have been so long familiar. Moreover, that the new reading is a more faithful translation of the text there can be no doubt. We find it there written, ‘And on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased.’ But a slight examination of this reading fully confirms what has just been said. ‘For *there is no* peace, saith the Lord, to the *wicked* ;’ it is to those who do His will to whom peace comes ; and in such alone is He well pleased. ‘Peace be with you’ was the salutation of Christ to His disciples ; and for what was He come to men but to give light to them that sat in darkness, and to guide our feet into the way of peace ? But, nevertheless, such peace can only be enjoyed by those whose ways are pure and upright in the sight of God. The wicked saith, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. But great peace have they which love His law, and nothing shall offend them. May we all be partakers of this peace !

## LECTURE V.

### ‘BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!’

‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!’—  
JOHN i. 29.

THESE were the inspired words of the Baptist when he saw Jesus coming unto him to receive from him that baptism in the waters of the Jordan, which He demanded and underwent as an example to those who should follow Him. John, the forerunner, who preceded Him but a brief space by birth into this world, had, like Jesus, lived probably a life of quiet and meditation, filled with the inspirations of the great mission to which he was called. His life was that of one to the world unknown and obscure. None knew of him as one distinguished above his brethren; none remembered the prophetic words of the angel to Zacharias at the altar; only in his own soul there brooded and grew a grand idea; in his own meditative and contemplative spirit he gradually realized the Messiah as One near at hand, as One who was his contemporary and his fellow-countryman, as One who, yet unknown to him, should some day, in the fulness of time, burst upon his vision, not as a mere man, without form or comeliness, and with no beauty that he should desire him, but as one whom his soul longed for, One in whom was the beauty of holiness, One whom his spiritual insight discerned as the Light of the world. John knew not *who* it was for whom he was a Voice in the wilderness, crying, ‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord!’—he knew not, any more than those about him, who it was that was nigh at hand; but when he saw Jesus Himself among them, and coming unto

him, when he saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and abiding upon Him, *then* he knew Him as the *Son of God*, and announced, with a voice like a trumpet, to an expectant multitude, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!'

And the words which the forewarned and inspired Baptist proclaimed on the day when the Messiah first made His public appearance among men, when He began to be about thirty years of age, are also those which might be said of Him when He first appeared upon the theatre of this lower world. There were some then who knew that the babe in the manger was the Lamb of God. Simeon knew it, and Anna, and Mary. The three wise men who followed the star in the East, and brought their offerings to the cradle-side, knew it. The shepherds, to whom the announcement was made by the angel, knew it, though perhaps the impression made was but transient; and indeed, notwithstanding all the miraculous accompaniments of the great and momentous event, the memory of it seems to have faded from the minds of men. When the aged prophets and prophetesses had been gathered to their fathers, and during the long period of infancy, childhood, youth, and adolescence of the wondrous-born child, the remembrance of it had been discarded from men's minds; and it needed the Heaven-directed exclamation of John to recall the events of a generation ago; and to many the memory of a half-grasped, and again lost, Messiah must have thrilled as with an electric shock at the words of the enthusiast of the wilderness, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!'

Words more suitable, indeed, could scarcely have proclaimed His advent in the flesh; when He was placed, a helpless babe, in a manger for a cradle, when being, as it behoved Him, made in all things like unto His brethren, He assumed humanity in its utmost weakness, and, by a mystery unfathomable to us, became an infant, destined to pass through all the stages of material growth and development, while the Divine within Him should increase unto the measure of the stature of the perfect

God ; until the Divine Truth, temporarily disunited, should be ultimately once more perfectly conjoined with the Divine Love ; until the Father in heaven, and the Son upon earth, should be again *one* and indivisible, and evermore a perfect Divine-human, an eternal God-man. For then, as the shepherds gazed awe-stricken at the Heaven-proclaimed and innocent babe, as the wise men knelt adoringly before the manger-cradled infant, as the mother bent wonderingly over her mysterious and worshipped offspring, as Simeon and Anna reverently held in their arms the young off-shoot of David, one and all knew, and one and all could have testified, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world !’

And never was a lamb more necessary as an atonement for sin ; for never was the world in so great a strait as now. Ages of declension from an original state of innocence and of goodness had reduced mankind to a condition of evil and sin, which was rapidly resulting in its destruction, utter and irremediable. Worldliness and unspirituality had made fatal inroads into a nature which had once been such that it could hear the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. They had followed evil, and despised good ; they had sought darkness, and despised light ; they had fallen away from holiness and truth ; they had rebelled against the commandments of Jehovah ; they had stoned the prophets, who were the voice of God ; they had followed their own evil devices, and cultivated the thorns and briers of the deceitful and desperately wicked heart, until their case had become desperate ; the face of God was veiled ; darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people ; and—where was the lamb for a burnt-offering ?

But although God could not show His face in the manner He had done in the former time, although He could not but abhor the evil which had fallen upon men, and cut them off from communion with Him, He was not unmindful of them, nor did He forget His promises. The seed of the woman should yet bruise the head of the serpent ; though how, no one knew.



There were but few in those days who remembered these promises of God ; but few cared to think of them. For though all looked for a Messiah, it was for an earthly leader, a temporal king, a material power which should hurl their conquerors from their firm seats and restore the glories of David. And yet there were some to whose mind the old promises were ever present ; some there were, the salt of the earth, who mourned the evil times upon which they were fallen ; there were some, a remnant, who ever prayed that the Lord would remember Israel. But this remnant preserved their faith, and cherished their belief, and they said within their hearts, 'God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering' (Gen. xxii. 8). It was indeed time ; and He who could lay down His life and could take it up again, the Lord of Life, sent His Son, the Divine Truth in a human form, to be that Sacrifice for sin which was so sorely needed. This was the *great* sacrifice, the greatest of all sacrifices, that to which all the sacrifices of the Old Testament dispensation figuratively pointed—the consummation of sacrifices, which has abolished for evermore all representative sacrifice : for 'Now, once, in the end of the world, hath He appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself' (Heb. ix. 26) ; and thus 'This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever, sat down at the right hand of God. For by one offering hath He perfected for ever them that are sanctified' (x. 12, 14). Behold, then, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

In what sense, then, we may ask, was our Divine Saviour a Lamb, by whose death we are preserved, and by whose blood we are purified ? It is easy to understand that by a 'lamb' was meant more especially 'innocence ;' and, above all, that interior innocence which arises from a profound appreciation of goodness and a deep-seated love of truth. For, although the young of all animals exhibit traits of that infantile gentleness which commend them to the best feelings of our own nature, it is the lamb which, beyond all others, claims to be the natural type of innocence, whether from its white and snowy fleece, its



lively and active gambols, its timid nature, or its entire freedom from the least shadow of harmfulness. All these qualities endear it to children, the innocents of our own race, and make it the most fit companion, the most meet emblem, and the most suitable representation of the quality all so highly prize—a quality which all possess at the opening of their lives, but which must be forfeited as the penalty of inherited sin, only to be regained by the aid of Him who is Innocency itself, ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’

But by the interior sense of the Word, we are to regard our Saviour as a Lamb in virtue of His humanity, that Divine humanity which He assumed at His incarnation, and which He carried with Him when He returned to the Majesty on high, in a perfected and glorified condition. That humanity was the Word, and that *Word* was Truth (John i. 14; xvii. 17); in which sense, as the Divine Truth, He was from the beginning; but when the Word came, clothed in flesh, unto His own, His own received Him not, knew Him not. And thus was the Lamb first slain when He stood, unacknowledged, in the midst of His Church. Thus was He seen in the vision of the Apocalypse, when (v. 6), ‘Behold, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four animals, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.’ This is He ‘who liveth and was dead, and behold (saith He) I am alive for evermore’ (i. 18).

And the Lamb was thus slain in more senses than one; for, figuratively, the denial of the Divine Truth of His humanity, was tantamount to His slaying; while His death upon the cross, at the end of His earthly career, was an actual slaying of Him in the flesh, accompanied by that shedding of blood whose spiritual meaning is so important to ourselves. And when we refuse to acknowledge Him, or to be influenced and governed by Him, we must ever remember that, in the words of the Apostle, ‘we crucify the Son of God afresh.’

It seems remarkable, at first sight, that so much stress should be laid upon the shedding of blood. To most people the idea

of bloodshed under any circumstances is repulsive ; and there can be no reason to suppose that to God, who is purity and holiness itself, the shedding of blood can be, in itself, any pleasure or satisfaction. Nor, indeed, can it by any possibility be so ; and those who imagine that God takes delight in the sacrifice of lambs, or goats, or calves, or oxen, merely for the sake of the blood which they shed, not only err greatly, but also do a gross and foul injustice to the God of mercy and of justice. Such people cannot comprehend otherwise, conceiving only according to their natural minds ; and such persons, therefore, can bring themselves to the idea that the God who delights in those sacrifices of innocent animals, can take pleasure in the blood and death-agonies of His only Son. Such gross conceptions are far removed from Truth, which cannot conceive of Christ as a vicarious sacrifice—which cannot, that is, entertain for a moment the belief that Christ has died instead of us, the innocent for the guilty ; or that God can for a moment accept the death of His Son in payment of the debt of sin incurred by us. The blood of Christ means something far more subtle, far higher and holier than this. Like everything else connected with Christian doctrine, or with spiritual teaching, it is representative, and has a full, grand, and pure meaning, devoid of anything approaching the gross or repulsive.

The blood of any animal, as that of our own bodies, is, as we all know, the carrier of nutritious particles to the whole organic system. No portion, be it ever so minute, is unvisited by the vitalizing stream ; and our bodies are built up, even to their extremest particles, by their contact with the ever-flowing fountain of life—'For the blood is the life.'

But blood stands among things of earth as the representative of Divine Truth, and Divine Truth is to the soul what blood is to the body. For the soul is not a mere shadow or formless substance, without parts or dimensions, but it is an organized, an elaborately endowed spiritual body—not, indeed, circulating a gross material fluid, but which is permeated in every part by the streams of Divine Truth. By this truth it is fed and nourished,

becoming more and more spiritual and celestial in proportion as it assimilates more and more of that eternal and ineffable quality, that Divine pabulum, which we begin to receive here, but in far less copious streams than we shall be able to receive hereafter. This explains the saying of our Lord, so difficult for His disciples to understand, and so hard to be received by many of us, 'For My blood is drink indeed' (John vi. 55).

Thus that which, naturally speaking, would only defile, in spiritual meaning is that which alone can purify; and therefore it was that the blood of a lamb, without blemish, was sprinkled upon the door-posts to avert the visit of the destroying angel, just as the blood of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world, sprinkled upon our consciences, will purify them and drive away all the evil and falsity which would otherwise destroy the soul. And so also it was that, at the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, it was commanded, 'Thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him' (Exod. xxix. 21)—a figure well understood by the Apostle of the New Testament dispensation, who said to the Hebrews (x. 22): 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.'

For not only does the blood carry nourishment to the remotest parts of the body, as Divine Truth strengthens the organic frame of the soul; but inasmuch as the body, particle by particle, decays, and is renewed by the vivifying contact of the blood, so also the blood has another and a scarcely less important office, namely, to remove and sweep away those effete particles which, if they remained, would act as a poison to the organism; so that it is also a purifier of the body, carrying away all that is noxious, all that is hurtful. So also Divine Truth carries away all falsity, all error, all evil, purifying the soul and cleansing all the secret chambers of the heart, and thus rendering it a shrine

fit for the dwelling-place of God and Christ. If, therefore, we admit into our hearts this Divine Truth, we shall render it susceptible of those momentous advantages which the blood of the Lamb which was slain can confer upon us ; and thus can we partake of the blessings of His birth, and of the benefits of His death, as well as of the glory of His resurrection.

But we shall not advantage ourselves if we only look to His cross, and flatter ourselves that by it we shall be vicariously saved, without our own co-operation. He has said, ' Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.' And in order to be a follower of the Lamb, we must also be followers of that innocence and chastity of which the Lamb was the figure ; we must ' crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts ;' we must present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service. Thus the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world, by showing the way to that freedom from sin, that innocency of which He is the type ; by enabling us to imitate the example He has set us, and by implanting in our hearts that Divine Truth of which He is both the type and the reality.

Let us look to this Lamb of God, not only as a recipient of baptism in Jordan, but as we find Him in the Revelation, when the innocency of the Divine humanity is pictured as representing the inmost heaven, the throne of God Himself. ' And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain . . . And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders ; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands : saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing . . . Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen ' (Rev. v. 6, 11-14).

## LECTURE VI.

‘YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.’

‘Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.’—JOHN iii. 7.

NICODEMUS, the fearful ruler of the Jews, who yet desired to be the disciple of our Lord, was not the only one who marvelled at this hard saying of his Teacher. To be born again could convey to him, as a Jew, at first sight, no other idea than a natural one ; and it seemed to him that it needed even something *more* than a miracle to carry out Christ’s idea. The Jews, at this earlier period of our Lord’s teaching, were not yet accustomed to the apparent paradoxes which so often fell from His lips. They were not yet alive to the fact that there were mysteries to be unfolded which they were utterly unable to fathom ; a reason to be laid bare, with which no explanations could render them familiar in their present condition of thought and feeling. And when our blessed Lord, at the very outset of His conversation with Nicodemus, enunciated the startling aphorism, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,’ the Master of Israel was staggered with a sense of the impossibility of its performance, and with a feeling that the idea propounded was either a mystical dogma savouring of gnosticism, or a mere endeavour to make sport of him by a meaningless paradox.

And yet, although our Lord’s sayings have before been spoken of as seeming paradoxes, it was far from His wish or intention that they should appear so. Nothing that our Lord uttered was really paradoxical ; it might be mysterious, and it

often was hard to comprehend; but whatever it was, it contained within it the kernel of Divine Truth. It might be very often difficult, nay, impossible, for his disciples even, to penetrate its casket of words, and to comprehend the contained sense, but the sense was always there, only He who uttered the words spoke them to dull ears, and to weak understandings, upon which they often fell unheeded. Yet were they a rich legacy to future generations, whose accumulated inheritance of knowledge and of spiritual insight enables them, in these days, to search them as miners search a rich mine, to be rewarded with jewels and gems, hitherto overlooked, but now affording an ample harvest and reward. No explanations of His words in those days would have availed to render His auditory more receptive; while a too plain unveiling of spiritual truth would have been but a 'casting of pearls before swine,' with a result not beneficial, but in the highest degree injurious to the recipients of His Truth.

But in the present instance our Lord did not let Nicodemus long remain in his natural error. In this case, so important to every man who followed Him, He deigned at once to explain His words, and to let His timid disciples go away wondering and impressed, but enlightened and satisfied. And so His aphorism was at once followed by its explanation, and the astonished inquiry, 'How can a man be born when he is old?' was not left long unanswered. For now, according to the narrative of the Evangelist, our Lord was on the very threshold of His ministry; He had just, as expressed by St. Luke, established the fulfilment of the prophecy of Esaias, which proclaimed that He was anointed 'to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.' And all these things are signified by the New Birth, which proclaims the Gospel to poor souls who stand in need of its support and solace; heals the broken-hearted penitent by assurances of forgiveness and newness of life; preaches deliverance to the captives held in bondage by sin; the re-



covery of sight to those who have all their lives been blinded by the dazzle and glitter of sin and the world ; and sets at liberty them that are bruised and buffeted by the messengers of Satan. For let us remember that, when Christ came, His forerunner had already preached repentance ; a repentance which was not to be a barren sentiment, but which was to yield fruits meet and worthy of that great wave of conviction which is signified by the axe being laid to the root of the tree ; and the first effect of the advent of the Messiah was proclaimed to be a turning from evil, a renunciation of sin, and a serious and real pursuit of good.

We have but to call to mind our condition by nature to understand the full purport of the great change which was implied by the uncompromising words, 'Ye must be born again.' For by nature we all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ; we are born in sin, and shapen in iniquity (Psa. li.) ; we were by nature children of wrath, even as others (Eph. ii. 3) ; expressions which imply an hereditary disposition to evil, inherited by all men from their parents, from generation to generation, since the Fall, when, 'as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned' (Rom. v. 12). Thus the disposition to evil is inherent in all, however much their dispositions may vary as to the degree of actual sin practised by each man. For mere inherited sin is not to be laid to our account, unless we adopt it, as it were—unless we hug it and make it actual by showing it a preference and taking delight in it. Yet, inasmuch as our nature is sinful, we are all prone to do this to a greater or less extent ; and no man can be entirely free from this evil bias and its consequences. Every man, therefore, is by nature sinful, and is born in sin ; nor can any deliver himself from the consequences of sin.

Neither, on the other hand, can a righteous God tolerate sin, whether inherited or actual ; for He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and in our natural dress we cannot stand before Him. Optimists, who have not studied the eternal laws



of justice and order, may imagine that God is too indulgent to regard a sinful nature as responsible for the evils it entails; they even go so far as to suppose that a comparative abstinence from active evil is a virtue which will entirely compensate in His eyes for the peccadilloes (as they call them) which everyone is liable to commit. Such easy-going moralists imagine that a man of amiable disposition, who will not do evil to his neighbour, fulfils the law and merits a place in the heavenly mansions; quite forgetting the strict precept of our text, which demands an utter and entire change of our natural character, and the assumption of a code of ethics entirely foreign to the nature into which we were born. Such a creed is dangerous in the extreme, because it lulls men in a false security. It is the creed of ignorance and indolence, a false morality, and a deceitful snare; yet it is of wide acceptance, and is one which many of us may remember to have passed through, at some stage or other of our career.

But it is this very state of things which must be put off. This is the natural mind which must be changed for the spiritual; this is the old Adam which must be crucified; and it is to many a martyrdom to part with the old habits and beliefs; and especially if the new ones entail the necessity of taking up our Cross. Yet, as we cannot be born again in a natural sense, so is it incumbent upon every one of us that we be born again in a spiritual sense; and we cannot fail to be, each one of us, conscious whether this great change has or has not been effected in our hearts; we cannot fail to be cognizant of the fact as to whether there have or have not been awakened in our souls new desires to conquer the old ones, new loves of the good and true to cast out the old corrupt ones of our original and familiar nature; new aspirations, soaring heavenward, and springing above the grovelling delights which characterize all who still remain in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.

For no man can by any possibility have undergone a new birth without feeling a rejuvenescence of soul, a lightness of

heart, to which he was previously a stranger. The natural man is as one who is wandering in a desert, in which nothing flourishes but brambles and thorns, in which none but evil beasts and loathsome creatures have their habitation; for in the natural mind evils predominate, and rapidly spring up and choke the remnant of goodness which a man possesses; all is confusion and disorder; no principle of good is in action which can result in an ultimate orderly arrangement; and evil thoughts, like inauspicious birds, brood unchecked in the heart. But of this wilderness the Holy Spirit can make an Eden; and in the new-born or regenerate man, the promise made in the prophecy of Isaiah (lvi. 3) is fulfilled, 'For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.'

But how is this great work effected in us, by which is produced that mighty and beneficial change which we call Regeneration? The words in which our Lord amplified His meaning to Nicodemus in the chapter before us, if carefully studied, will leave us, as it left His disciple, enlightened and strengthened. His first explanation is one which, like His words in general, may be misunderstood, if we forget who was speaking, and in what guise His words were wont to be uttered. The words of the Lord are too often interpreted like the words of men, and we are too apt to regard them simply from a superficial point of view, forgetting that He had said of them, that they are spirit and they are life. Of what other words can this be predicated? and how can we doubt that the Lord's words transcend all others, and require to be spiritually discerned, not in the aspect of the mere letter, but in the deep meaning which corresponds with things divine?

Jesus answered, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Is water then necessary to the new birth? and can washing make a man regenerate? Some will

answer this question in the affirmative, and be prepared to believe and assert that the washing or sprinkling of water in baptism will effect an important change in a man's spiritual condition ; will, in fact, put his faith in the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, forgetting that material water cannot wash away spiritual sin, and that external washing will not extend its benefits to internal evil. But water, in the language of our Lord, always signifies the Divine Truth—that living water, which, if a man drink, he will never thirst more—that well of water springing up into everlasting life, which the woman of Samaria asked to partake of. And to be born of water is to be metaphorically washed from all the evils of sin, to be purified within, even as the body is purified without, to have that effected which the repentance preached by St. John in the wilderness was to bring about, viz., the reformation of life, the putting away of sin, the ceasing to do evil. This being done as a preliminary step, then is regeneration completed by the agency of the Spirit, who instils into the purified heart, thus prepared for his dwelling, all that vitalizes and renews, all that is holy and good, all that illuminates and inspires. Thus by water and the Spirit is the old man expelled and the new man created day by day ; the natural man becomes effete and dead, and the spiritual man takes his place, and complete regeneration both of outward life and inward soul is completed and consummated.

For that which is born of flesh is that which we bring with our natural bodies by the first birth ; while that which is born of spirit is entirely foreign to it, and can only be obtained by the second, or new birth. The works of the flesh enumerated by the Apostle must be expelled, and the works of the spirit must take their place ; for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary one to another. But the new birth is the conquest of the spirit over the flesh ; and to be regenerate is to walk in the spirit, so as not to fulfil the lust of the flesh (Gal. v.). 'Marvel not then,' continued our Lord, 'that I said unto thee, *Ye must be born again.*'

And then, in these few words, having demonstrated the nature of Regeneration, He proceeds, in an equally brief and terse manner, to describe how it is effected ; in words, indeed, which the unspiritual will find deep problems, too high for them ; but which, if approached in a humble and spiritually-minded manner, will be found pregnant with meaning and import. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth ; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.' Thus is it demonstrated that regeneration is not the work of man, but of God. The new birth is no more to be effected by man alone, than is that birth of which it is the antitype. 'Yet, nevertheless, must man desire its benefits, and co-operate with the moving Spirit, which seeks to effect it. We cannot trace in our own souls the marvellous process which the Spirit of God is working in our hearts ; but we may perceive that a great change has been effected in us, and may exclaim : 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.' It is the growth of the soul—which we can no more distinctly trace than we can the germination of a seed, or the development of a leaf ; but we know that a seed has been planted in a favourable soil, and from it there will spring first the blade, then the ear, and then the corn in the ear. 'For the kingdom of heaven is as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, *he knoweth not how*' (Mark iv. 26).

But yet are we fellow-workers with the Spirit, whose efforts need our co-operation. We must will to do that which is good and right, and then will the Lord's influence work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, although we may not understand the steps by which His work is effected.

For in this new birth we also receive from the Lord new life. The soul lives not truly until its inmost faculties are opened, and in the natural man they are closed. Naturally we are dead unto sin ; spiritually we become, by regeneration, alive unto righteousness. And we cannot ourselves compass the

awakening to life of the soul any more than we can comprehend the dawning of material life, so to speak, in our bodies, or in the seeds which spring up in the fields around us ; but the birth of the soul once begun, we can aid the Spirit in its work by nourishing it with suitable food and drink, by following and appropriating goodness and truth ; and thus, by degrees may the soul grow up to the measure of the stature of the perfect man. But there are many temptations to quit the right path, to partake of evil food, unwholesome for the soul ; and temptations must be overcome, and will be overcome in proportion as we become established in the love of good for its own sake. In all temptations we shall learn to perceive the merciful hand of a loving God, who permits them, as a source of power to the soul ; and we shall gradually learn to be assured that 'we shall reap if we faint not.'

The words of our Lord, then, 'Ye must be born again,' should ever be in our minds ; for if we must be born again we should lose no time in seeking the aid of the Holy Spirit, without which our regeneration can never be effected or even begun ; but by whose operation and influence we may learn in time to 'put off the former conversation of the old man, which is corrupt, according to deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of our mind ; and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness' (Eph. iv. 22-25).

## LECTURE VII.

‘AS MOSES LIFTED UP THE SERPENT IN THE WILDERNESS.’

‘And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.’—JOHN <sup>iii.</sup> 14.

To the secret visit of the timid Nicodemus to our Lord we are indebted, under Providence, for those priceless teachings concerning the new birth, which were such a puzzle to him, and to us so full of meaning, and so replete with instruction of the highest kind. For this mystery of a new birth, so clearly explained to the Jewish master, underlies all the teaching of the Gospel ; and is, indeed, the basis of all the advantages held out to us as followers of Christ. It is the condition, as it were, upon which we are to be admitted members of the fellowship of Christ; and without a clear comprehension of it we can make no step in advance towards that goal which we all profess to have before us as a landmark and beacon.

But Nicodemus comprehended not at first the conditions of this new birth. His doubt and his want of spiritual insight are expressed in Holy Writ by the simple question, ‘How can these things be?’ but it is enough ; and although he probably left our Lord a wiser and better man, he was but in the position of each one of us, who, for the first time, hears and weighs the deep truths of the Gospel.

Still, probably many will ask, ‘What connection is there between the new birth and the lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness?’ At first sight, indeed, this verse seems inconsequential and forced ; but every line and every word of the sacred writings bears a close inspection, and indeed requires



a deep and steadfast consideration, in order to make it yield the fruit it is intended to bear to our spiritual advancement ; and such a consideration will show that there was, indeed, a close connection and an intimate bond of union between the emblematical serpent of the Old Testament and man's condition in the New, when the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

For it must be borne in mind that in the very outset of our human history, as recorded in the correspondential language of the first chapters of Genesis, we find the serpent playing a very important part. The very first chapter (Genesis ii.) describes the state of innocence in which man was placed in the garden of Eden. For in this state of innocence there can be no reasonable doubt that man did begin his moral and scriptural history—if there be any meaning in the sacred record—a state of innocence which lasted for an indefinite and unknown period, and which only came to an end when the serpent appeared upon the scene. In the last verse of this chapter we have the record of their purity ; and in the very next verse, the first of the following chapter, we read this pregnant passage, 'Now the *serpent* was more subtle (crafty) than any beast of the field which the Lord had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden ?' Do we suppose, when it is said the serpent was more crafty than any other 'beast,' or 'living thing,' that its craft extended to imitating the speech of man, and talking with human voice to the woman ?

No ; we no more suppose this than we suppose that this same crafty serpent at this period walked upon feet, because it was part of its punishment henceforth, 'upon thy belly shalt thou go,' or has ever since fed upon dust. But we adopt the reasonable idea, which renders consistent and rational the whole context, that the serpent, so designated, was a symbolized principle which, from the very first, was at war with our human nature ; a principle which was persuasive and specious—to which, if we listened, it would work our ruin, but which it was



our duty to resist to the last ; a principle to which, if we succumbed, it would enslave us, by means of the lying promise, 'Thou shalt not surely die,' but which, if we duly and strenuously resisted, we should be enabled to conquer and to trample it under our feet.

This principle, therefore, which the serpent represents, is one which is necessary to the completeness of our earthly nature ; it is an essential part of the being of creatures, who, like mankind, are destined, for wise purposes, to spend the infancy and probationary period of their existence upon an earth where they must use their external senses. These senses in themselves are good, like everything which God made ; but they require to be kept alive, as it were, by earthly exercise, and are liable to be unduly brought into prominence and to enslave their owners—to become, as it were, masters, where they were intended to be only servants, unless they are kept in subjection by higher feelings, and restrained within due bounds by the dominance of a superior principle.

This sensuous principle in man was evidently intended to work for our good. All things that were created, when reviewed by their Creator, were pronounced to be very good ; but the position which this principle was to occupy in our nature was denoted by the behest that man should have dominion over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. For if this sensual principle, which is such an essential part of our natures, be not kept in subordination, it follows that it must be elevated at the expense of something better in us, something which has better right to hold a high position in the aggregate of the qualities which make up the sum of our human nature. In a word, if the sensual principle is allowed to predominate, it can only do so by supplanting our rational principle ; it can only rule by enslaving our reason, through the conquest of our spiritual nature by the base passions of an earthly sensuality.

All the wrestlings of mankind which were to result in this unhappy thralldom were foreseen by Him who placed us upon this sphere of strife and struggle ; and God, who had given His

creatures a freedom of will and a power to maintain an independent and personal equilibrium between good and evil, foresaw, in His omniscience, that man would first *fall*. I say, *first* fall; for we cannot doubt that if this had been the normal and inevitable condition of mankind, the All-wise would not have permitted so terrible a fate for His creatures. But the very earliest promise given to man, while it implied his fall, also foretold his restoration; while it acknowledged the inevitable, also showed the Providence of God, who in these, as it were, early days of man's career, had already provided a means of escape from the penalty which must follow the breaking of the law of life; and by which also he should be enabled, laboriously and slowly, to climb back to that pinnacle of goodness from which he had fallen. 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman: and between *thy* seed and her seed: it shall bruise *thy* head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' And this promise did God redeem when 'He also Himself likewise took part of flesh and blood: that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage' (Heb. ii. 14, 15).

But it is evident that there was but one way of recovering man from the conquest made of his soul by the powers of sensuality and sin. The sensuous principle, which had been unduly glorified at the expense of a higher and more noble characteristic, must be reduced once more to subjection; the rational principle, which had been dethroned and ignominiously thrust from its seat and trampled under foot, must resume its sovereignty. Thus only could this sensuous principle, good in itself, become again an element, as it were, in the goodness of man. Like fire, it was a good servant, but a bad master. As a master, it lowered man's whole nature, and degraded his whole being; as a servant, it was an orderly factor in man's advancement, in his typical nature, and in his normal spirituality. The excessive preponderance given to the sensuous principle was, as it were, an injustice to itself—by giving it undue influ-

ence, to its own disadvantage and undoing. It had an appointed place where it was beneficial and healthy ; but, exalted into the place of another, it became itself degraded, and was productive of general mischief and universal harm. Its restoration, therefore, to its natural sphere was like the reduction of a fevered pulse, which, as long as it was unnaturally exalted, was destructive alike to the system and to itself.

When, therefore (as we read in the twenty-first chapter of the book of Numbers), the children of Israel were plagued by fiery serpents which the Lord sent among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died, we understand that the serpent was made instrumental to the punishment of those sins among the Israelites which are typified by the serpent. And when the people repented, and Moses prayed for the people, ‘The Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole : and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.’ Thus did Moses ‘lift up the serpent in the wilderness ;’ and thus are we taught a great spiritual lesson. For as God was pleased to punish the people by serpents, for the sins typified by the serpent, so also did He make the serpent the means of restoration. By the lifting up of the serpent there was meant the elevation of the sensuous principle to that natural position which it had forfeited by its subjugation of the spiritual principle, the restoration of the sensuous principle to that *rôle* in human character which was allotted to it by nature, and without which perfection could not be attained ; the useful servant, the quiet pulse, which maintains the faculties in a healthful equilibrium, and in a calm and well-balanced attitude of heavenly progress.

The previous verse of this chapter of St. John is not without its bearing upon this subject. ‘And no man,’ says our Lord to Nicodemus, ‘hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven.’ From which we can understand that man cannot raise himself. No combination of earthly perfections can carry a man to the

sphere of heavenly influences. No man, as such, can raise himself to heaven, unless he be aided by that which came down from heaven. And unless a man be instructed by the Spirit of Truth, he can never raise himself above the sphere of earth ; and no elevation of his principles or faculties can raise him above the plane of the natural. But that which comes from heaven is Divine Truth ; and in all parts of the New Testament our Lord speaks of Himself as the Son of Man, in relation to Divine Truth. It is therefore by the agency of the Son of Man alone that man can ascend to heaven ; and hence, 'as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up ; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

The humanity of Christ was naturally inferior to His divinity ; and, in assuming humanity, our Lord took with it the weaknesses and imperfections of the human body. If it had been possible that the humanity of Christ could have subjected His divinity, then would have been seen on a vast scale the spectacle which man presents upon a smaller scale when his sensuous principle overrules and brings into subjection his rational principle. But of course such a thing was impossible, and our Lord came to give us an example which we might follow. He came to show how the weakness of humanity could be overcome by the victory over temptation and the conquest in times of trial ; and He so exalted His humanity as to render it glorious, and ultimately to make it fit to be conjoined with His divinity in one indissoluble essence. He was lifted up upon the cross as the serpent of brass was lifted up in the wilderness, and all who looked to Him should be saved. 'And I,' He says, 'if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' And all men who saw in Him their pattern and example, and would look to Him as such, and endeavour to the best of their ability to imitate Him, would thus bring themselves within the sphere of His power to save. And as Christ did not abolish the human in Him, as He progressed in His advancement to spiritual glorification, so we are not called to abolish in our-

selves that principle which is represented by the serpent. As long as it is kept in its proper subordination, it is an integral portion of the perfect man; and it is only when it is exalted beyond its true position that it becomes injurious and destructive. The natural, however, should ever exist in its place and proportion, and (Matt. x. 16) our Lord recognises the just balance which should be maintained, when He says to the disciples whom He is sending forth into the world to preach and to teach, 'Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.'

But the corollary which we may draw from the analogy of the brazen serpent with the lifting up of the Son of Man, is found in the words which our Lord further addressed to Nicodemus upon this memorable occasion: 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' When the brazen serpent, which was the type of the uplifted Saviour, was lifted up in the wilderness, all they who directed their eyes towards it were freed from the plague which attacked them, and recovered their natural life; but everyone who looks toward the antitype with faith in His power to save him, is freed from that second death to which we have all become subject. For He who appointed the brazen serpent for the succour of the repentant Israelites, who, by faith, made use of the appointed means, has in these days given His only begotten Son for the redemption of all who choose to accept His offered salvation. For as our Lord, calling Himself the Son of Man, was the power of Divine Truth, or the Word which was made flesh and dwelt among us—that Divine Truth which came out of heaven and which alone could raise us to heaven—so the Divine Love was present in Him as the Son of God, which originated the scheme of that redemption which consisted in giving Himself a ransom for our sins, in coming Himself in the flesh, whereby He could at once subjugate the infernal powers, constitute Himself our example and our guide, elevate our humanity by glorifying His own, and in His own person establish a *rap-*

*prochement* between God and man, bringing God nearer to man, and man nearer to God, and becoming a new and living Way, a Mediator between God and man. Thus a God of love, out of that Divine love, gave Himself, the Son of God, to be our Redeemer, raising us to heaven by the medium of Divine Truth, the Word made flesh, which was the Son of Man ; lifted up on the cross (as an instrument of His glorification), and drawing all men towards Him out of the death-like bondage of sin, to the everlasting life of righteousness and true holiness. And this everlasting life He offers to all, freely, and without exception, upon simple conditions which all may fulfil. 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.' 'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.'

NOTE.—Lest any confusion should arise concerning the views of the Author as to the early history of Man, it seems desirable slightly to amplify the allusions to it made in the first Lecture. Taking the earliest chapters of Genesis as descriptive of the condition of Man from his original introduction upon earth, onwards, the first chapter would appear to refer to a primitive rudeness, which required mental and spiritual moulding and organization, by stages correspondent to the formation of the physical world ; until the condition of innocence was finally effected, with which the second chapter opens. This primitive stage of our race, when the spiritual life and consciousness were 'without form and void,' would evidently correspond, in evolution, to the unconscious stage of Infancy, immediately leading into the age of innocent Childhood.



## LECTURE VIII.

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

#### I. '*Blessed are the Meek.*'

'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.'—MATT. v. 5.

WHEN our Lord opened His mouth to utter those wonderful sayings, which made the Sermon on the Mount so remarkable, He began by announcing blessings on those who were in various states of heavenly-mindedness. And it may indeed be said, that as He *ended* His career on earth by exclaiming, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' He also commenced that career by blessing all those who would listen to His teaching and consent to be guided by His counsels. These Beatitudes, as they have been called, embrace every class of Christian men, and are a source of solace and consolation to all whom they embrace, whether they be suffering or rejoicing, whether they be fortunate or unfortunate, in a worldly point of view ; the poor in spirit—the mourners—the meek—the hungry and the thirsty after righteousness—the merciful—the pure in heart—the peacemakers—the persecuted for righteousness' sake—all these are bid be of good cheer ; for He that came to bind up the wounds, and to heal the broken-hearted—He that will give to every man according to His work—even *He* hath declared them *blessed*.

Much, indeed, has been written upon the subject of these Beatitudes, which have ever been a grateful theme, inasmuch as there is no one who takes an interest in such subjects but probably will come under one or another category of those upon



whom the blessings are to fall ; and much comforting doctrine has been extracted from the simple words of our Lord, who contented Himself with saying 'Blessed.' So that it may be doubted whether the unlearned Christian, unskilled in commentaries, may not yet have gathered to himself as much consolation by taking to his heart the unvarnished words of our Lord, as he could do from volumes of annotation and of amplification ? For what can be imagined to go more directly to the hearts of the mourner or the persecuted—no less than to the merciful and the pure in heart—than the welcome and soul-filling salutation, 'Blessed are ye' ?

But while the simple words are the best for those who can take them, it does not follow that the Beatitudes are all of equal simplicity, or all equally commend themselves to the minds of simple folk. There is, at least, one of them which we think may be liable, if construed with too literal an interpretation, to be doubted and misjudged. None can fail to recognise and to appreciate the value of the words, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted ;' but it may not be so with the succeeding verse, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' For here we have the case of words which, in their first and most literal meaning, carry on their surface a possible interpretation, which is not so evidently conformable with the strict teachings of the Gospel. For what quality is implied by the term 'meek' ? and what is it to 'inherit the earth' ? 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven ;' but 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.'

The term 'meek' is by no means an uncommon one in Scripture ; and the virtue it implies is one which is recognised in the sacred writings as of a high quality, and worthy of imitation and acquirement. In our modern phraseology, perhaps, meekness is not usually applied in a manner to inspire respect ; it implies, rather, a deficiency of robustness of character, of that firmness and strength of mind which are deemed necessary to hold one's position amongst one's fellow-men, or to carry

through the world that independence which is considered an essential element of success in life. But this is, after all, an artificial application, suited for worldly purposes, and wanting in the real and primary meaning of the word. And when we bear in mind that it is stated as a characteristic of the great leader and lawgiver of the Jews, we must look for some other explanation. For we read (Numb. xii. 3), 'Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth;' yet did his meekness not disqualify him from standing before the great Pharaoh, from reproving the most powerful potentate of the world, from denouncing God's judgments upon him and his people, and from carrying away the armies of Israel from their bondage, despite the resistance of this hardened and self-willed sovereign. Nor did the meekness of Moses militate against his capable conduct of the chosen people of God through all the difficulties and all the vicissitudes of their desert-wanderings, when a firm hand and a steadfast will were more than ever requisite, and where the unrivalled fitness and power of the great leader stand conspicuous as a marvel and a wonder to this day.

But we have yet another example of meekness, which should help us to understand what is intended to be expressed by that term. It is our blessed Saviour Himself, who gives Himself that character, and who Himself adorns and elevates that quality. 'Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me,' saith He; 'for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' He is our teacher and our great example; and if He is meek, then must we also be of like quality. And the Apostle (in 2 Cor. x. 1) makes reference to this characteristic of the Lord when he says, 'Now I, Paul, beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.' And as such was he announced by the prophets of old, as by Zechariah (ix. 9), quoted by St. Matthew, 'Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold the King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass' (Matt. xxi. 5). But, indeed, we may rest assured that this quality of meekness is one which we should

all seek to acquire. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit against which there is no law. For the fruits of the Spirit are these—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ; and these fruits are such as can only be borne by those who have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

From these examples it follows that the meek are those lowly-minded who acquire a habit of mind, foreign to their original natures, such as renders them followers of Christ and inheritors of His kingdom. For it is to be observed that meekness has no affinity with weakness, as according to a worldly interpretation it might be supposed to have. Meekness is a form of charity, and, indeed, the highest form. It is the charity which thinketh no evil, the charity which suffereth long and is kind, the charity which seeketh not her own, and is not easily provoked. The meek are those who regulate their minds in conformity with the dictates of the Gospel ; who are able, not only to look with equanimity upon the inconsistencies of those among whom they dwell, but also can patiently suffer all that may happen to themselves from the vagaries or the unregulated passions of others not so well disciplined as themselves. For, being principled in charity, they are strong in a principle which brings courage and endurance. Fulfilling the law of the Spirit, they can bear to see others possess what is denied to themselves, and can even suffer to be persecuted for righteousness' sake without strife and without resentment. They are never violent under any provocation, they are never passionate under the sway of revengeful feelings ; they can put up with taunts, unjust accusations, or causeless reproaches, without reviling, strong in their grounded belief that charity is incapable of retort, long-suffering, generous. Even as Moses exhibited this virtue when Miriam and Aaron spoke against him, and rose in sedition against him, saying, 'Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not also spoken by us?' for then it is that the sacred historian appositely remarks, 'Now the man Moses was very meek'—a type, indeed, of Christ, 'who, when He was

reviled, reviled not again ; when He suffered, threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously' (1 Peter ii. 23). Herein truly was the meekness of Christ exhibited—this was the very incarnation of true charity—the example for those who, following Him, He declared to be 'Blessed.'

But all this is not the dictate of our original nature in which we were born. The natural man is contentious and strife-loving ; he is revengeful, and insistent on his rights ; he tardily admits the rights of others, but will persistently fight for his own ; he is violent, passionate, envious, wrathful. And to cast aside these natural inborn qualities, and to substitute in their place something quite different and obnoxious to them—though, peradventure, it be the substitution of good for evil—is a work which no man can do for himself ; but if he is willing to do it, and seek aid from above, he is none the less praiseworthy, and his strength is none the less real. It is a fight which man has to fight with the powers of darkness ; a struggle with forces unseen, in which sword and spear are of no avail, and in which the bravest and most dashing warrior may find himself bested, and may lose heart and courage, and turn his back to the enemy and fly.

But he who conquers will have his reward ; and not a few passages in the Holy Scriptures refer to the delight which the Lord takes in the meekness of His followers. The Psalmist more especially dwells repeatedly upon this. 'The meek shall eat and be satisfied' (Psa. xxii. 26) : 'they shall praise the Lord that seek Him'—the latter clause being, as it were, a commentary on the former. 'The meek will He guide in judgment : and the meek will He teach His way' (xxv. 9). For what is a surer aid to judgment than charity ? or a surer guide in the path of life than love ? 'The Lord lifteth up the meek : He casteth the wicked down to the ground' (cxlvii. 6) ; and, as the crown of these promises, it is said in Psa. cxlix. 4, 'The Lord taketh pleasure in His people ; He will beautify the meek with salvation.'

For to whom is the Gospel preached if not unto the meek ?

As saith Isaiah, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound' (Isa. lxi. 1). And the coming of the Lord, which should make the deaf to hear, and the eyes of the blind to see out of obscurity, was also to result in that 'the meek should increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men should rejoice in the Holy One of Israel' (Isa. xxix. 18, 19).

For this is 'that hidden man of the heart, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price' (1 Peter iii. 4). 'In patience possess ye your souls,' admonished our Lord, when speaking of the destruction of the earthly temple and of the last day. 'There shall not an hair of your head perish;' wherefore, then, should the spirit be unquiet, even though the ungodly flourish, and though, to all appearance, worldly affairs should become lowering and dark? 'Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph. iv. 1-3). Here, indeed, is the *morale* of meekness. It is, indeed, a phase, and an exalted one, of that love to the neighbour which is the fulfilling of the law. 'Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye' (Col. iii. 12, 13). 'Be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves' (2 Tim. ii. 25); 'speaking evil of no man, be gentle, showing all meekness unto all men' (Titus iii. 2).

And not only so—not only must our dealings with our fellow-men be characterized by this absence of self-assertion; but even when we may consider ourselves charged, in the light of teachers, with superior wisdom wherewith to benefit our brethren, we are to do it in the same spirit. We are not only

to 'receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls' (James i. 21), but also to 'sanctify the Lord God in your hearts : and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear, having a good conscience' (1 Peter iii. 15).

Such are the meek, of whom it is said, 'They shall inherit the earth.' But it has been observed that the Beatitudes follow one another in an ascending order, as it were—that is, in an order which signifies the progressive advance in the attainments of goodness and truth. Again, as the Beatitudes are nine in number, so also are they divided into *three threes* ; each series in an ascending scale. It follows, therefore, that whereas the one in question is the third of the series, it is also the highest of the three. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,' is the first ; the poor in spirit being those who, knowing their own destitution, acknowledge that all they possess of goodness is not from themselves, but from above ; and who, therefore, awakened to this knowledge, have, for the first time, the internal man awakened, and opened, as it were, in them—thus figuring the birth of the kingdom of heaven within them. This is the first step in the regenerate life. This it is, without which no man can begin his heavenly race, or can make any start from the sphere of earth, into which he is naturally born. So, similarly, 'Blessed are the meek'—those, that is, who are conscious of their deficiency—who, having the internal man opened for the reception of truth, desire to live according to its dictates, and in that charity which is the outcome and embodiment of truth ; 'for they shall inherit the earth'—that is, they shall come into the possession of all the graces of the regenerate external man.

For the earth here does not signify, as most persons would cursorily suppose, the temporal blessings proper to this world, or the good things which may arise from the possession of temporal benefits ; it has a far higher meaning. For the *earth* refers in Scripture to man's external condition, by means of which he is



related to the natural world, just as the *heaven* signifies always that internal constitution which connects him with a spiritual world, and which is said to be within man. 'O earth, earth, earth,' cried the Prophet Jeremiah (xxii. 29), 'hear the word of the Lord.' And again, speaking of the desolated Jewish Church the same prophet exclaims, 'I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light.' The *earth* thus spoken of in Scripture does not mean this lower world, but the external man, which is naturally evil, and which can only be regenerated by the process of opening the internal man. The process of regeneration, that is, must begin from within; the interiors of the soul must be first opened—awakened, by the influences of the Holy Spirit, producing repentance, which repentance is followed by newness of life; that is, by so adapting the habits of the external man to the new requirements of the soul, evil is forsaken and good is followed. It is by this means alone that a man is converted; and it is thus that those who have become principled in goodness and in truth, who live the life of charity enjoined everywhere in the Scripture, having first established the kingdom of heaven in their hearts, progress by conforming their outward life with their inward convictions, and thus become truly regenerate recipients of the kingdom of heaven and inheritors of the earth.

Thus this apparent reversal of the order of things is shown to be only an appearance, and the language of Scripture is vindicated. Thus also is it shown that the reading of the Word, so as to comprehend its true scope and meaning, is not arbitrary but consistent; and that apparent solecisms are the result of imperfect knowledge on our own part, and of an incorrect appreciation of the plan of Scriptural composition. In Psalm xxxvii. 11 we have precisely the same expression used, for it is there written, 'But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.' And thus New and Old Testaments alike agree in the blessing which shall reward the lowly of heart, the self-denying, uncomplaining, all-



forgiving, long-suffering, practisers of the truest code of charity and brotherly love.

Thus it will be seen that this verse refers to that continual and oft-repeated topic with which the Scriptures may be said almost exclusively to deal, viz. the 'Regeneration of Man;' for that is the burden of every lesson, of every admonition; as it is, indeed, the most needed, the most pressing want of man's nature. Born to hereditary evil, he must renounce it; having by nature lost the impress of goodness and truth, he must regain it; and the change thus implied is the great work which is laid upon every man, who must be born again, who must be first renewed inwardly in heart, and secondly must put into practice the principles he has thus learned outwardly, in this life. Thus, and thus only, can he find a place among those meek who shall inherit the earth—of whom the Prophet Zephaniah exclaims (ii. 3), 'Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.'

## LECTURE IX.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (*continued*).

### 2. *The Lord's Prayer.*

‘Give us this day our daily bread.’—MATT. vi. 11.

FROM childhood upward we have all been taught to say what is commonly called ‘The Lord’s Prayer ;’ and from childhood upward we are all familiar with the words of that petition. We are familiar, indeed with the words; but how many of us, whether as children or as grown persons, can be said to be familiar with the meaning of the words we so commonly use? When is it that, emerging from childhood to maturity, we first begin to comprehend the spirit of the beautiful prayer which our Lord Himself taught us? Do we ever, many of us, all our lives through, appreciate the spirit of that prayer of prayers—that one petition, which embraces all we need—that comprehensive aspiration which supersedes the long addresses, supplications, and conditional demands which are too often offered to the Deity in the name of prayer?

‘When thou prayest,’ said our Lord, ‘make not long repetitions, as the heathen do ; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. After this manner therefore pray ye :’ and the manner thus indicated by Him, who was Himself both the hearer and answerer of prayer, was at once a model of briefness and simplicity, and at the same time comprehensive and all-embracing. Like all the utterances of the Divine, it addresses itself alike to the simple and to the wise—to the learned and to the unlearned. The simple can see in it the

pure and heartfelt phrases which bear, even in their natural meanings, all those yearnings which their souls so powerfully, so passionately long to offer to their God ; the wise and the learned see, beyond that, a deep internal meaning, which teaches them that far within are deep and sacred aspirations which are adapted to the highest spiritual desires and needs of their instructed and enlightened souls ; and to those who know how to use it aright, the Lord's Prayer becomes the one appeal—the unique petition, which comprehends in its brief sentences all that man needs for time or for eternity ; the loving request to a Father for the necessities of earthly life ; the passionate entreaty to a God for deliverance from the dangers which beset the path of spiritual existence and the advance to the heavenly state.

We may shut to the door, and commune with our own hearts and be still ; we may, like Daniel, fall on our knees three times a day, or like David, seven times a day we may praise the Lord ; we may offer up a special supplication in time of sore need, or we may habitually lay our daily life and all its changes and chances before God, and seek His guidance in all our affairs ; but if we follow the advice of the Apostle Peter (1 Peter v. 7) in 'casting all your care upon the Lord, for He careth for you,' then have we need for no recourse to any other prayer than that of our blessed Lord, for in it is included everything we require, both temporal and spiritual. At once a prayer and a thanksgiving, it is also an ascription of praise and glory to Him whom we address ; and, moreover, it contains, to the full, that element too often left out in our own spontaneous and unaided petitions, viz., resignation to the Divine will, a firm trust in the Divine power and guidance, a self-negation which asserts no obstinate adherence to our own unaided judgment, makes no demand for doubtful advantages unqualified by any dependence upon omniscient love and Divine tenderness. This is the advantage in chief which the Lord's Prayer possesses over all others ; for who is there who, in his prayers, does not think too much of his own desires ? or who is willing to be

guided solely by the wisdom of the Almighty, as to how much that he asks it is fitting that he should receive? How many, like Christ, qualify their prayers with 'If it be possible; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' This is the crucial test of sincerity; this is also, doubtless, the standard by which we ought to measure the probability of a reply. 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.' For everyone asks amiss when he asks for unconditional gifts, or for what he esteems to be blessings, only from his own point of view. For it is God alone who knows what will bring blessing and what curse; and the man who seeks for blessings of his own choosing, and repines because he does not receive them, is like a child petulantly crying for some unattainable impossibility, and angry because he does not obtain it. These ask amiss, and these, in God's mercy, do not obtain their petitions.

But the Lord's Prayer is free from any such objections. We may safely make use of it without any fear of incurring the blame or the rebuff which necessarily follows many of our own unconsidered requests. It contains all that we need; and if it be imagined that more special petitions for the necessities of the moment are desirable, and are not to be found in the Lord's Prayer, the answer is plain, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.'

The whole value of prayer, indeed, is a question which is comprehended in these brief remarks. Prayer is not intended as a reminder to God that such and such benefits and blessings are at a particular juncture desirable to the petitioners. Prayer is not that man may choose his own lot, his own advantages—his own will, in a word; but Prayer is a preparation of the heart. Its object is to place the soul in such a condition or state in relation to Divine things, that a man may be fit to receive all the good things which God is ever ready and willing to give to all who call upon Him in truth. God ever waits to be gracious—waits, that is, until the blessings He wishes to bestow can be

received, and no longer ; but without a receptive mind in a man, God waits in vain. Prayer produces receptivity, and hence its use : and the moment God perceives the soul to be so prepared as to be capable of taking in His heavenly gifts, that moment does He gladly impart them. There is no tardiness with Him ; the tardiness is all on man's side. He may clamour for what it is impossible that he can receive, but he clamours in vain, like a child who cries for the moon ; and it would be equally reasonable for a child to blame its parents for not yielding to so unreasonable a request, as for a man to charge God with foolishness because he did not receive what it was folly to ask. God desires that man should receive the benefit of His best and highest gifts to their fullest and uttermost extent. It depends entirely upon man whether he will receive them ; whether he will so adapt himself to spiritual things as to be capable of receiving to the full all spiritual blessings.

The Lord's Prayer is brief—so brief, indeed, that were it a petition of our own framing, we should consider that we had erred on the side of coldness and carelessness ; and rightly so, for any prayer of our own, in as few words, would be full of omissions and imperfections. But it is at once the merit and the marvel of this divinely-taught address to our Father, that it contains all that is necessary ; that it is, in its short space of half a dozen lines, an epitome of all the wants, spiritual and temporal, which can occur to mankind. And not only this, but while it asks for all that is good, it avoids the error of asking aught amiss ; nothing is contained in it which it is not fit that we should request of God. And thus the great pitfall of our own prayers is entirely avoided ; and leaving ourselves in God's hands, we address ourselves to Him in terms which we know He cannot fail to approve. It is not intended in so brief a space to attempt a full analysis of this beautiful and wonderful collection of supplications ; but it is necessary just to glance at the character of those words we so constantly use, and which many use daily all their lives long without under-

standing their real meaning, without perceiving their true drift.

'Give us this day our daily bread.' But it is night, perhaps, and we need no more this day our daily bread. But our Lord has said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God;' and while our daily bread is necessary at stated intervals to support the strength of our bodies, so the spiritual food which this bread implies is a constant necessity, not confined, like the want of daily bread, to the waking hours. 'With my soul have I desired thee in the night,' says the Prophet Isaiah (xxvi. 9). And the Psalmist often expresses the same idea: 'Thou hast visited me in the night' (xvii. 3); 'I cry in the night season, and am not silent' (xxii. 2); 'The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me' (xlii. 8); 'I will call to remembrance my song in the night' (lxxvii. 6), etc. Such passages might be multiplied, but it is unnecessary to illustrate further the fact that while our daily bread is necessary in a literal sense, in a spiritual manner the term implies all that is proper for the nourishment of the soul—all spiritual gifts, all good thoughts, all such subjects of spiritual contemplation as may keep the soul alive to its relations with God and heaven, and may nourish it in goodness and truth, in love and in wisdom.

But in reality the term 'daily bread,' even in its outward signification, is not to be taken in that literal sense which we are brought up to perceive in it. The expression is indeed a very remarkable one, and one which in the original does not convey with any strictness the meaning which has been attached to it. The word used by the Evangelists, both by St. Matthew and by St. Luke, is a very peculiar one—indeed quite peculiar to themselves—for *ἐπιτοσίσιος* is found nowhere else but in these two passages. It is therefore a word difficult to translate, so as to give its true and subtle meaning, which is indeed that which is 'sufficient unto the day'—that is, as nearly

as it can be converted into English phraseology. Our daily bread, therefore, is the nearest equivalent which the translators could use, without however, entirely conveying all it signified.

But whatever may be its exact meaning to the scholar, the simple Christian only knows that he prays for the continuance of mercies which he humbly recognises as coming daily and hourly from God above. Daily bread—the continual supply of temporal needs, such as in this life, at least, are as essential to his well-being as the very air he breathes. Here we have material bodies which can only be supported by food and drink—not luxurious living and rich beverages, but the staff and fount of life. These we have given us daily; and how many among us are there who have ever felt what it would mean if these were to fail? Surrounded with abundance, we look upon famine as an unreal ghost—a spectre which cannot approach us; and thus we are apt too lightly to regard and value mercies which come, as it were, spontaneously, and without our own care—almost without being asked for.

And yet these simple supplies of food and drink are no less gifts from God than any darling wish which may appear to be gratified in answer to our prayers. For such we do right to be thankful, and for such it is just that we should acknowledge God as the Author and Giver; and this we do whenever we say from our heart, ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’ And this acknowledgment keeps our hearts open to the reception, not only of the material bread, but of all those great and spiritual gifts which bread represents. For while bread is the staff of this lower life of the body, there is a bread no less necessary for the higher life of the soul; and our Lord Himself has said, ‘I am that Bread of Life. The Bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. I am the Bread of Life. He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst’ (John vi. 33, 35). Well might the disciples say to Him, ‘Lord, evermore give us this bread;’ and this we practically exclaim daily in the Lord’s Prayer, when we say, ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’



For all goodness and all truth are progressive. We cannot grow up at once from childhood to maturity, but we must eat daily bread sufficient for the day, and in process of time our bodies gain strength, and vigour, and fulness of proportions. And so with the Bread of Life. We cannot assimilate more than each day's share, nor can our souls suddenly step into that completeness of development which can only be arrived at by the daily increment of goodness and truth which we derive from the spiritual food wherewith He regales us. We are built up, as it were, *edified* by slow progressive instalments of our daily spiritual bread, 'here a little and there a little,' until we come 'unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Eph. iv. 13).

The Lord's Prayer is such a wonderful production, combining in its few short phrases every expression and petition suitable for angels or for men, that we could not misplace any passage without marring the whole; still less could any portion of it be omitted without a loss of unity and a destruction of the completeness of its scope, as well as of the subversion of its Divine Order. The first portion has relation to the Lord, and to heaven—it is aspiring, angelic—and can only be truly advanced by the regenerate man, who can look above this world and find his truest delight in doing the will of God. Such we may imagine to be the genius of the angels; and such petitions or ascriptions as form the first part of the prayer we may reasonably suppose are fitted for the devotions of angelic companies, no less than for the supplications of the sanctified yet remaining upon-earth.

But the latter portion of this prayer descends from heaven to earth—and even yet lower. Temptation and evil are things of hell, and from these we pray for defence and deliverance; and thus we find it is adapted to every possible class of persons, for every possible grade of the regenerate condition, to every possible state of the human soul. But between those petitions which relate to heaven and those which have reference to hell, we find inserted the intermediate step of the world; and

when we ask for a renewal of our daily bread, we have passed from the consideration of the highest and best, and are preparing for the contemplation of the lowest and worst; for in all these states may the soul be placed, and its needs may embrace any one of the varying class of petitions of which we have here so vast a range. From the contemplation of good to the shunning of evil, the prayer gradually descends, each phrase being more adapted than the other for the individual soul that makes use of these words of Divine wisdom; and the turning-point from the one to the other is the petition, 'Give us this day our daily bread.'\*

Heaven and the things of the soul belong to the internal man; evil and temptation are more properly stages of the external man in its progress to regeneration. But between the two, and having the character of both, is the rational man—that faculty which is ever desirous of assimilating good and truth, in proportion as it approaches the spirit of the internal man; or, perhaps, to draw its wisdom from less pure and perfect sources, in proportion as it approximates the external or lower man.

But this conscious faculty is in us all; this power of perception of knowledge or choosing good from evil, of drawing to ourselves, if we so will, all that is good and true—all that is wise and righteous. Our natural appetites may be pampered with rich living which may produce disease, by overworking the powers given to our bodies for its digestion and assimilation; or they may be in that healthful state as to choose the wholesome bread and its kindred aliments to the strengthening and knitting of our bodily frames. So, also, our soul may choose to be nourished either with those forbidden delicacies of sin which corrupt and weaken its tone, and unfit it for communion

\* It is worthy of note, as exhibiting still further the deep and transcendent spirituality of the Lord's Prayer, that a parallelism has been remarked between it and the Decalogue; more apparent in some portions than in others, but traceable throughout. 'Our Father' corresponding to the first commandment; 'which art in Heaven,' to the second: 'Hallowed be Thy name,' to the third, etc.

with what is best and holiest ; or it may rather prefer that Bread of Life (which is Christ)—‘that true bread of God, which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world’ (John vi. 33).

And when we say ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’ we should at least remember, that our Heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things, and that all these things shall be added unto us if we will do His will ; and that this should be our meat and drink.

Let us then, in making this petition, remember these truths ; let us labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto us. Let us ever bear in mind the promises of Him who said, ‘I am the Bread of Life,’ whenever in our supplications we say, ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’

## LECTURE X.

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (*continued*).

#### 3. '*When ye Fast, be not as Hypocrites.*'

'Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance : for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face ; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret : and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.'—MATT. vi. 16-18.

THE Church of England, following in their ritual the incidents of the life of our Lord, set apart the Lenten season as a time of fasting, in remembrance of the time when our Lord, entering upon His active life upon earth, underwent those great spiritual temptations of which the wilderness of Judæa was the terrible scene. During a space of forty days and forty nights we are told that He fasted—voluntarily abstained from the ordinary nourishments required by the body—being led to this abstinence, not by any wish to perform a commendable act of self-denial, not probably even with the intention of mortifying the flesh, but because He was passing through a great and remarkable phase of temptation and trial, during which the mental state was such that corporeal conditions were forgotten ; the spiritual exercise and wrestlings were so great that the body forgot its wonted requirements, nor demanded its wonted sustenance until the fight was over, until the warfare with evil influences was accomplished, until the victory over Satan was won. And then the soul, like an overstrung bow, was loosed ; and the neglected body, no longer subdued by the over-

mastering spirit, asserted itself; and He who, for forty days and forty nights, had existed in an agony of mental strife, which had stifled and subdued the calls of His earthly nature—He was afterwards *an hungered*.

Such, in brief, was the great fast of our Lord—a fast, as to duration, imitated by some of His enthusiastic followers in after ages; but which, yet, in its nature and consequences, is necessarily unique. For although He has shown us an example that we should follow in His steps, it is evident that we can only do so afar off, and not act as He did in all things, since He was an infinite God, although temporarily trammelled with the body of humanity, while we are but finite creatures, to whom the frail human body is but the natural tenement of our weak and erring souls.

Still, as Christ has here set the example of fasting, Christians in all ages have felt that their duty lay also in fasting, under peculiar circumstances or conditions, or at certain times and seasons. And although in the Reformed Church little stress is laid upon such fasts, in other sections of Christendom they have grown to be a great and important item of the ecclesiastical machinery. In this respect, they have indeed lost favour with Protestants, on account of the abuses to which they have become subject; for all good things are liable to such abuses, when their proper *end* is forgotten, and when they become the engine for the aggrandisement either of self or of any self-constituted body which seeks an illegitimate importance at the expense of others.

But it must always be borne in mind that fasts were of very ancient institution, and were well known among the Jews in long-past ages. David fasted when his child lay sick, and would not eat bread, though the elders of his house would persuade him thereto; and in explanation of his change of conduct after the child was dead, he said, 'While the child was yet alive, I *fasted* and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' (2 Sam. xii. 22) 'Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly'

(exclaims the Prophet Joel, i. 14), 'and cry unto the Lord, Alas for the day ! for the day of the Lord is at hand.'

From such passages, it is evident that a fast was symbolical of self-humiliation, with the avowed object of averting the evil brought on as the consequence of sin ; as a sign of confession and repentance which is exhibited with the hope that such a self-abasement may turn aside the judgments of God, and cause Him to remember mercy.

There are, indeed, several kinds of fasting, which indicate as many distinct conditions of spiritual life. The fasting which our Saviour underwent in the desert was not like that of David ; in it there was not self-humiliation—it did not imply a sense of sin which such humiliation could remedy by averting the punishment due to it ; but we have seen that the fasting of our Lord was rather a victory of spirit over matter—an exalted condition of soul consequent upon great spiritual trials, under which the body and its wants were unheeded, and the whole faculties were absorbed in a struggle in which the soul was conscious of nothing but its own paramount needs—assailed with a sense of danger to its peace and security, which permitted of no reference to the petty affairs of the world or to the temporal necessities of the corporeal frame. In such a fast as this the struggle may be carried on until the body perishes ; for the flesh is but weak, howsoever willing may be the spirit. In such a fast as this have the ecstasies of the middle ages striven to imitate their Master, unconscious that in so doing they have been ignorant of the infinite nature of His spiritual temptations and of the infinite results to mankind which have followed upon the victory which He then achieved.

Such fasts as these, then, we are not called upon to perform ; nor are we in any way justified in so abusing our own bodily frames as to render them unfit for the purposes of our existence, and for the *uses* which our position in life renders us capable of enacting. Rather, we can serve God best by keeping our bodies in such a state of healthy activity as may enable us to fulfil all those duties entrusted to us, and which make

up the business of our daily life ; and so intimately are the faculties of the body and of the soul bound up together as long as we are in this world, that the one cannot but suffer by any derangement in the machinery of the other. Hence a *mens sana in corpore sano* is no mere scholastic sophism, but the profoundest wisdom and the highest truth.

It is for this reason probably that fasting, as a means and sign of humiliation, are discountenanced by our Church. During the existence of a representative Church, such as was that of the Jews, fasting was naturally a highly symbolical and representative act, not confined to the deprivation of necessary food, but applied to those signs of self-abasement which usually accompanied the fast, such as sprinkling ashes upon the head, or covering the limbs with sackcloth and rags. These things were but the outward signs of that sorrow for sin, of that denial of self, which the repentant sinner could assume most readily, and which would be acceptable sacrifices in proportion only as they sprang from a pure desire of confessing sins, and from a sincere wish for forgiveness. But it is evident that such acts could only be representative, and could only be satisfactorily ordered in a purely representative Church. For, like all things in themselves good, they would be liable to great abuse, inasmuch as it would soon come to be perceived that a mere outward manifestation of sorrow would not be difficult, and would be an easy penalty for evil committed—a salve to the conscience in advance, as it were, which would excuse the commission of sin on the ground that the remission of its consequences would not be difficult. And this was just the effect it had upon the worldly and unspiritual Jews, who not only made no objection or difficulty in fasting, but by degrees came to practise it simply as an advertisement of their own goodness, to be known and read of all their fellow-men. These men were indeed entirely ignorant of the true meaning and signification of fasting ; and the difference between their method of fasting and that of David, was precisely indicative of the declension of faith and of spirituality which had taken place in the Jewish nation



from the time of the illustrious king to that of the appearance of our Lord upon the earth. Now indeed was the world grown totally external and hypocritical—religion was a farce and a sham—men no longer cared for Him who saw in secret, but were only desirous that their fellows should think well of them, and often doubtless deceived themselves in their insane wish to deceive those about them ; their fasting was a mockery ; they were like whited sepulchres, which outside were good to look on, but within were full of dead men's bones and of all manner of uncleanness. But our Saviour came to inaugurate a new order of things. His kingdom was not of this world. He taught that those who worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. He came to realize in men's hearts that which hitherto had only been obscure and representative. He came to awaken men's souls from the torpor of their natural state, to illuminate them with the genuine spirit of Divine truth, to vitalize, to animate, to spiritualize what had become merely formal and dead ; and He saw, with a holy loathing, the hypocritical sad countenance of the professional penitent—the wanton disfigurement of the features of the pretended practiser of severities and fasts ; and He denounced them as impostors and cheats, who looked not to God, but to man, for approval, and verily they had their reward.

It is to be feared that in these days there are not a few who act as did the hypocrites denounced by our Lord. In countries where fasting is made obligatory, many shifts are in use to avoid the reality, and replace it by its shadow ; and the annals of Romanism are unfortunately but too full of scandals arising from the substitution of the letter for the spirit, among those to whom either the reality is irksome, or the significance of the institution is ill or imperfectly understood.

But in these days it would betray great folly in us if we were to plead such ignorance. In these days we cannot but know that forms avail nothing—that God seeth not as man seeth—for man looketh to the outward appearance, but God seeth the

heart. The New Testament is the spirit of the Old—the new dispensation is the internal soul which vivifies the representatives and symbols of the old ; and in the New Covenant fasting is not a mere empty form, but a spiritual reality. Even the Prophet Isaiah taught the same thing when he said (ch. lviii), 'Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him?' Here, indeed, even in the Old Testament, are the precepts which chiefly distinguish the New ; and in these verses are the condemnation of those hypocrites whose sad faces called forth the rebuke of our Lord in Jerusalem.

To fast, indeed, is truly to mortify the flesh. In its lowest sense it may signify that mortification of the deeds of the body which is necessary to the resistance of temptation, but in its higher sense it signifies that mortification of the mind, which leads a man to avoid taking pleasure in sin, which is his natural bent ; for man is born to sin as the sparks fly upward. All sin is love of self, and naturally all men love themselves first. To resist this self-love, therefore, is a true mortification of the soul ; to *kill* this self love, and to replace it by other and better affections, is a true fast.

For when self-love is opposed and defeated, then there comes in its place the love of others. We are not naturally anxious to serve others more than ourselves, and, therefore, such service to others implies denial of ourselves ; and in all efforts at unselfishness we are obtaining a victory over sin and Satan, and helping to destroy the old man within us with its affections and lusts. All the deeds of charity are outcomes of such spiritual fast and mortification, and all the fruits of the Spirit grow out of its beneficent influence, being all dependent upon, and in proportion to, our success in our battling with our own evil propensities, our love of the world, the flesh and the devil—in a word, our love of *self*.

But even if we succeed in this mortification of ourselves, even if it cost us a severe contest, we are enjoined that we are not to let our struggle be too conspicuous to the world. ‘Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast ;’ for such struggles must be borne with meekness. It is not enough that we carry out the precept which teaches us to deny ourselves, but we must do it with cheerfulness and goodwill. It must not be felt as a sore trial imposed upon us, which could not be endured without great loss of temper and equanimity—but rather as a *duty*, which we ought to perform with, if not gladness, at least resignation to what we are convinced to be the will of our heavenly Father, imposed upon us in love, and with no other object than our own very highest interests ; or, best of all, as a privilege and a source of pleasure joyfully to bear the cross, and to feel gladness that we are counted worthy to suffer with Him who is our pattern and example. But the greater the struggle the more it behoves us to keep it secret from men, and our Father who seeth in secret, and can duly estimate the severity of the battle, will give us the reward of our victory—that inward peace which passeth all understanding, that satisfaction which springs from the knowledge of the Divine approval, and that delight which the exchange of good for the evil which was in our soul will surely enkindle.

Such will be the result of a true spiritual fast, which consists in seeking the good of others ; and of that mortification of the spirit which consists in resistance of the evil influences and temptations which surround our path through this lower life. Thus also shall we fulfil the precept of the Apostle James (i. 27), who says, ‘Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this : to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.’

## | LECTURE XI.

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (*continued*).

#### 4. '*The Law and the Prophets.*'

'Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.'

It would be well if we were to bear in mind carefully and distinctly when it was that these words were uttered by our Lord. The world has passed through various stages of its history, and mankind has also experienced numerous phases, both physical and moral, of its development ; and as the earth, on the one hand, has gradually been becoming more and more fit to be the theatre of an expanding and developing race of intelligent beings, so has that race, we would fain believe, been slowly but assuredly improving *pari passu* with its dwelling-place. And although there was a civilization of remote times in what we may yet call barbarous ages—a civilization of Egypt, of Babylon, of Greece, and of Rome—yet were those civilizations deficient in certain great elements, not understood, unacknowledged, indeed unknown, and therefore not missed by the great leaders who framed those and other ancient systems. In all these great systems of civilization it was the understanding which predominated ; it was the human intellect which asserted itself, which raised to itself monuments of power, of glory, and of pomp, of art, of science, and of beauty. The conqueror, in the pride of power over his fellow-men, sat upon his throne of state ; the warrior-monarch, by virtue of his superior strength of intellectual character, ruled over his subjected people with a rod of iron ; the nobles, alike supported

by, and supporters of, the throne, held their satrapies in fee by the material power they possessed to bind adherents to their cause ; the priests, acting on the superstitions of mankind, surrounded themselves with a bulwark of solid authority, which sometimes availed to tread upon the necks of kings ; and the people, ignorant and brutalized, were content to acquiesce in the dominance of their harsh rulers, and accept a position which was too often that of standing on their guard, as though in every man they beheld a foe. The philosopher, the poet, and the artist alone, loving their science, their philosophy, and their art for their own sake, moved on serenely in the turmoil of the ages, weaving those systems, and framing those works, which were surely destined to exercise a benign influence on mankind in general, to raise each age to a higher platform of intellectual and social energy than it had previously occupied.

But with all this power and pride of intellect there was a great void. Although there were not wanting aphorisms of sages, which inculcated an abnegation of self, and a desire to act for the benefit of others ; such notions were regarded as mere fanciful dreams, which few, indeed, ever thought of putting into practice, and which were rather admired as the abstraction of the philosopher, than carried into effect as binding, or even useful, laws of life. The disciples of the schools of wisdom alone fairly took cognizance of the lessons of justice, of mercy, and of human equality and human responsibility ; and they, it is to be feared, regarded them rather as ideals than as realities. It is not, therefore, to be greatly wondered at that those who were practically the rulers of mankind—whose law was their sword—set but little store by precepts, which may have reached them, as it were, from afar, and which must have appeared to them as the poor-spirited maxims of peace-loving and unwarlike civilians. For they came with no authority ; they maintained, it is true, during those ages of strife and of repressive violence, a great human principle—they kept it alive, like a spark, which it was not possible could be extinguished ; they fanned it into a star-like ember, because it was an inalienable right of

humanity—a part and parcel, though as yet unrecognised, of our human charter of liberty—the kernel of our better nature, which was all but concealed by the husk of self perpetually growing around, enfolding, and ever endeavouring to close it up from view.

Of our two great twin faculties during these long ages only one appears to have been successfully cultivated. In those stern times intellect was that which raised a man above his fellows, to be a ruler of men. Intelligence and mind availed to hold in subjection the hosts of mankind less powerfully endowed, and the rights of a common humanity were held in no esteem by those who had enlisted on their side the might of the sword. There was no softening of the heart of him who held authority over the lives of his fellows; there was no room for feelings of brotherly love in men who placed their feet upon the necks of their fellow-men. Men were too jealous of one another—too eager to obtain the upper hand; and when obtained it was kept with a firm grasp which admitted of no soft-hearted compromise. With the mass of people it was equally a struggle for existence, in which each man stood on his guard against the over-reaching attempts of his compeers; and the law of love, unknown and unrecognised, would have been regarded as the acme of suicidal folly had any seriously attempted to carry it into practical effect.

We must, at this point, bear in mind that the words of our text fell upon the world with a Divine authority—not yesterday, but two thousand years ago—at a time when the state of things, to which I have alluded, was everywhere dominant. When Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount, Rome was at the height of her power. Roman emperors carried conquest to the farthest corners of the known world; Roman conquerors came back to their countrymen with acclamations and with decreed triumphs. Most of the civilized nations of the present age were unknown barbarians, whose history had not begun; and our own favoured land had not emerged from superstition and aboriginal ignorance, nor had a suspicion of the part which



Providence had destined it to play in the history of the world. The Jews themselves were in the lowest condition of morality which had fallen upon them since the time of Abraham ; possessed, indeed, of the real law of humanity, but having no comprehension of its true meaning and bearing ; hearing but understanding not, and seeing without perceiving. It was a time when the heathen raged furiously together, when the people imagined a vain thing, when the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed. It was at this time that Jesus of Nazareth enunciated to the multitude as a truth, and not as a mere philosophical abstraction, this great principle, ‘ Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.’

But how could it be expected that this injunction should find acceptance at such a time, and among such a people ? It was not new—that is, not new to their understanding—though it must then have struck them in an entirely new light. Like the Areopagites to Paul, they might have said to our Lord, ‘ Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears ; we would know therefore what those things mean.’ The founders, or rather the restorers, of religion in China, in Persia, and in India, in very ancient times, had taught the same thing, and had met with an abstract acceptance from the admirers of their doctrines or their philosophy ; but the truth had not thereby been any more accepted in the hearts of men as an axiom of morality and a dictate of our inmost consciousness. How, then, did our Lord succeed in establishing this great law of our nature ? for we may take it as granted that this declaration, as the sum and substance of the teaching contained in the Sermon on the Mount, became from that moment the law of the world, universally recognised among civilized peoples, and, to a certain extent, practised ever since by all whose actions were in accordance with their consciences.

Our Lord spake as never man spake ; He spake, that is, with a power and persuasion, such, that even if He handled topics



which were not heard absolutely for the first time, yet they received a new impulse, a new light, from His teaching. Our Lord taught with authority also, and not as the Scribes; He addressed Himself, that is, to the deep-seated inner consciousness, to the ineradicable perception of good and evil, of right and wrong, which everyone possesses, but which is seldom reached even by a direct appeal, when it lies buried in hearts long unused to weigh the distinction, seared by thoughtlessness and neglect, or muffled by custom and surroundings with a thick cloak of selfishness and indifference. To such the precepts of philosophers were addressed in vain. To such the words of our Lord came with a new power, which, like the sword of the Spirit, 'pierced even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart' (Heb. iv. 12).

Moreover, the true secret of this power is found in the concluding words of the verse, wherein, after pointing His great injunction, He adds, 'For this is the Law and the prophets.'

The Jews, although in the time of our Lord no better than the neighbouring nations in matters of ethics and morality, and only superior to them in their formal worship of the One True God, were yet the depositaries of laws, of commandments, and of a religious system derived directly from the Fount of law, of order, and of religion. Little as they appreciated their possession, it was theirs; and it was this which singled them out as a remarkable nation. They had neglected their trust, it is true; they had falsified the teaching delivered to them by Moses direct from Jehovah; but the words of that teaching were eternal and inviolable, and our Lord came to assert them, to bring them to remembrance, and to establish them for ever. And one of those sayings which the Jews might read, the 19th Leviticus, verse 18, ran thus: 'Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people: but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. I am the Lord.'

It might be said that the Jews never, until our Lord delivered the parable of the good Samaritan, knew, or at all events never

perceived and appreciated, who was their neighbour. This ignorance could no longer be pleaded in excuse by them, after He had said unto them, 'Go, and do thou likewise.' These words imposed a new covenant, a new commandment, a new responsibility, which was to last until the end of the world. 'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise' (Luke vi. 31). The second commandment is like unto the first, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' Thus a second time, in this same gospel, is this great truth distinctly affirmed.

We have here, then, a law of our humanity, a law of nature, a law of God. Not a law made the other day—not made even 2,000 years ago, by the advent of Christ—but a law under which we were created, a law which is part of our being, a law which cannot be infringed without unhumanizing us. When God was pleased to frame the world, he laid every force of nature under an exact and unerring system of laws, which could not be broken, because they were the embodiment of the Divine Order, which is the outward expression of God Himself. The universe is now, at this day, as subject to these laws as it was at the beginning; they are never outstepped or infringed, and mankind can depend, and does depend, upon these laws as far as discoverable, for every advance they may make in those arts and sciences which conduce to civilization and human progress. The law is invariable; the deduction is certain. If there were any fickleness in the law, the hand of man would be palsied, and his advance impossible. If, on the other hand, the law was despised, or set at nought, the contempt or the neglect would recoil upon man with double force and defeat his ends, as surely as though the law itself had failed.

Again, God created man with a moral nature, and with those attributes, reflected from Himself, which we call Humanity. In man, no less than in nature generally, the law is exact and unerring. In man are certain religious and moral, psychic and

ethical elements, not warring against each other in chaotic confusion, but under the strict guidance of, and subjection to, Divine law. Man, like nature, has his general laws and his particular or special laws; and two great general laws are enunciated more than once in the sacred writings—the one being the subordination of all his faculties in reverence, adoration, and love to his heavenly Father; the other, the recognition of common rights in his fellow-man, the subserviency of self to the good of others, the remembrance that he, individually, possesses no undivided or supreme claim upon the bounty and goodness of God, but that all men are equally children of one great Father, that all men constitute members of one great family, that all men have an equal right to His protection and care, that all men are interdependent upon one another, that all men are placed upon the earth for mutual assistance, for mutual encouragement, and for mutual support. Add to this that man cannot by any possibility elevate his soul, except by the exercise of its influence for good upon those around him, and it becomes patent that this fundamental law of our being is a beneficent and a benign law, which cannot possibly be neglected or set at nought without an utter disorganization of our spiritual faculties, and a total ruin of the ends for which we are placed in this world. If a man breaks the physical laws of the universe, he does so at risk, and incurs peril and danger; so also, if he breaks a great moral law, he cannot fail to reap a like result in that inner self which is the seat at once of his sin and of his punishment.

Isolate man from his fellow-creatures, condemn him to have no communion with them, to solitude and loneliness—and his soul revolts, reason becomes dethroned. Such a man would willingly become the servant of servants, could he only be restored to his natural intercourse with humanity. The law of nature asserts itself. Nor would we be supposed to imply that the law has been always unheeded, always dormant, prior to this teaching of Christ. In all ages there have been bright examples of unselfishness and benevolence. In all ages has

our humanity declared itself in deeds which might put to shame many of the acts of our boasted Christian civilization. But none the less, the doctrine first took its due and proper hold upon the world from the time that the words of our text were uttered upon the Galilean mount. From that time the earth has been less full of the habitations of cruelty ; from that time men have gradually learned that it is not only their duty, but a law of their nature, to climb, not upon the shoulders of their fellow-men, but by mutual contact and aid ; to rise, not alone and unheeding of the rest, but to stretch forth the helping hand to raise with them the less fortunate and the more needing support—to extend their aid to their fellow-men, not asking if they are of the same nation, of the same religion, of the same politics, or of the same station in life, but remembering only that He giveth alike ‘to all, life, and breath, and all things : and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth’ (Acts xvii. 25, 26).

## LECTURE XII.

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (*continued*).

#### 5. *Enter in at the Strait Gate.*

‘Enter ye in at the strait gate ; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat : because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.’—MATT. vii. 13-14.

WE have in these verses one of those remarkable utterances of our Lord with which the Sermon on the Mount everywhere abounds. For those chapters in which are found the collected series of sayings which have received that title, contain the pith and marrow, as it were, of His teachings—the essence of the Christian religion, in all its bloom and in all its perfection. We can hardly suppose that all those sayings, thus brought together, were spoken at the same time or on the same occasion. They were probably collected by the Evangelist from the numerous sermons or teachings which our Lord gave to the people, in the synagogue, from the boat on Gennesaret, or from the Mount. For we always find that our Lord did not overdo His lessons, nor overtask His hearers. If He had occasion to give spiritual instruction, He did it sparingly, as to people who could not bear much at a time, who could not digest too plentiful feasts of spiritual food ; and He therefore spoke unto them according to their ability to hear and to understand His words. We can therefore hardly suppose that this prodigious banquet, called the ‘Sermon on the Mount,’ could have been spread before them all at once. For it was equivalent to a moral revolution : to be understood and acted upon would have re-

quired a change in human nature equivalent to a new birth ; such a change as, in the very nature of things, could not be otherwise than slow and gradual. His was at the same time the newest and the greatest system of morality which had ever been laid before mankind. It was at once novel and striking, and yet of such a nature as to commend itself to the inmost conscience of its hearers as something good and true. It was, as it were, the expression of all that had ever been the ideal and the aspiration of the greatest teachers who had instructed mankind, and kept alight the torch of religion and ethics in the breast of the human race. It was a code which could nowhere have been *enforced* upon any nation or people, could nowhere have been made practicable until it had become grafted in the hearts of those whom it was to rule ; and therefore in no age could it have been introduced by any *coup*, or made acceptable by any popularity or cajolery of a personal legislator or favourite individual philosopher. On the contrary, so divergent was it from the ingrown prejudices and the native feeling of every age, that its promulgator would probably have been reckoned an enthusiast and a fanatic, and his utterances fond and Utopian.

But He who did promulgate this wonderful code was one who came with power, who was recognised, even in that age, as one who spoke with authority—nay, as one who spoke as never yet man had spoken ; although there were not wanting sages and philosophers who had enlightened the earth with bright gems of wisdom and science. And He came to make things new—not in the sense of having been hitherto non-existent, but to restore old and lost traditions and knowledge, to replace upon her throne that Truth which had indeed been cast down from her pedestal, but which was yet imperishable and unchangeable through all the chances and variations of the world and its nations. And therefore could He wield His speech like a magic wand which held sway over the hearts of men ; He could find entrance to those hearts by a magic key known only to Himself, because He alone held the clue which was to adapt

eternal truth to the very nature and primal constitution of mankind, with which it had been once in harmony and from which it could never be permitted to be absolutely in discord.

But even He would not have too rashly attempted to bring them into union. He had many things to tell mankind ; but He, better than anyone, knew the mode and fitting season ; and He taught His disciples, and still more, the ignorant people (not so much under His personal influence), here a little and there a little—line upon line, and precept upon precept : as St. Mark expresses it, ' He spake the word unto them as they were able to hear it ; and when He was alone, He expounded all things to His disciples,' in order that He might fit them to be Evangelists, teachers of His doctrine to the world at large.

But when we read, as in the Gospel by St. Matthew, the connected series of teachings which are there displayed in the form of the Sermon on the Mount, we cannot fail to be struck by their beautiful unity, their wonderful bond, and the bearing of chapter on chapter, and verse upon verse. There is a remarkable interdependence of all the parts, and each paragraph—brief and terse, like all the Biblical writings—though at first sight somewhat unconnected and inconsequential, becomes, on a closer examination, so inwoven into the whole, that any attempt to mutilate, by the excision of any subject or motive, tells upon the whole plan, and disarranges and disfigures the general complexion of the whole result. And this, we would suggest, is a strong argument in favour of the inspiration of these writings, since it can be pointed out that this unique code of moral and religious teaching, collected from numerous and probably isolated addresses by our Lord, made to a wondering people eighteen centuries back, is presented to us as a complete and connected essay, well fitted for the consideration and adoption of a world educated and advanced by the lapse of that long and important period of time, the most important and most fraught with change and progress in the history of the world.

To turn, however, to that especial section of this wonderful



sermon which stands at the head of this Lecture, it may be seen that it is to be read in connection with the precepts which go just before it. Our Lord has been urging upon them the necessity of *love to the neighbour*. In fact, the whole of the precedent verses refer to that essential law, and are summed up in the 12th verse, in the words, 'Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.' But this important duty, which is thus declared to be absolutely incumbent upon us, is one which is naturally repugnant to us. The natural man exclaims, 'Charity begins at home.' He sees no reason why he should sink his own individual claims in the sight of others, or merge the love of his individual self in the desire to increase the happiness of those beyond his personal sphere. The regenerate man, however, knows that self must be secondary—that his duty to others is at least as great as his duty to himself—that he is morally bound to do for his brethren as least as much as he would do for himself. But even this is only the first step in spirituality. It is the earliest lesson, which will withdraw him from the slough of self-love and awaken in him an interest *outside self*—give others a share in that intense interest which heretofore, and by nature, was concentrated in his own person. Yet he must not stop there. There is a natural law, there is a spiritual law, and there is a celestial law. The natural law (which we call the first law of nature) is self-interest; the spiritual law is, that we do for others as we would do for ourselves—this is the law of our renewed nature, the opening of our interior and better consciousness, which thus becomes alive to the perception of higher things than our nature prompted—the conviction and the practical performance of which, however, could only be effected by the working in us of something which would so change our wills as to render possible that which before was absolutely without the range of our natural powers. But still there is a higher law beyond.

For we have only thus gained a step, though be it granted a most important one, as it is the first. But the celestial law

consummates in us all that the spiritual law has, tentatively, as it were, effected ; and we are by it prepared for that perfectness which can scarcely be gained in this life, but which our education and training in the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount will fit and prepare us to fulfil hereafter. For the celestial law demands that we shall so entirely reverse the natural order of things, that we shall love our neighbour *better* than ourselves. Here is no word of doing to others as we would they should do unto us, only—but to *prefer* one another, to sacrifice *self* so entirely, as to wish only for the advancement and happiness of others, and so to work for it as to find, and to secure for self, the happiness which arises from the good of others. This is a widening of the individual sphere—not a self-negation in the sense of self-abandonment or self-contempt, but a self-repression which is of the nature of a personal elevation, and an accession of self-respect in its highest and most durable form.

But to reach this goal much restraint is required ; and here it is that our text furnishes us with a guide : ‘Enter ye in at the strait gate’—the narrow way. It is no easy matter for a man to change his love—the love, that is, which by nature constitutes his life. It is easy to talk, but not so easy to act ; but to be ‘renewed in the spirit of your mind,’ this requires self-denial, self-restraint, self-abnegation, self-abasement. For a man who loves himself, and has no thought for his fellow-man, there must be self-denial exercised before he can be brought to share with his neighbour the benefits which hitherto he has regarded as his own by prescriptive right. He must be used to self-restraint before he can cease from, or curtail, those personal indulgences to which he has become accustomed, in order that others may partake of the fruits of his abstinence. There must be a practice of self-abnegation which shall allow no feeling of envy to mar his rejoicing with those to whose lot may fall good things denied (for the time) to himself ; and there must be a power of self-abasement which shall admit of the belief that *he* is not better than others, that *he* has no superior claim to the goodness of God, and which enables him to recog-

nise, in *others*, virtues which heretofore he has believed to be centred only in himself.

All this renders the gate very strait—the way very narrow. Burdened with his own self-love, it would be impossible to traverse it; and one so laden would be apt to tread the broad way which leadeth to destruction, for ease and freedom. For it is the nature of man to select that which is easiest, and to reject that which presents the greatest difficulty; and the way of life is, to the unregenerate, hard and repulsive. It requires a certain amount of self-spurring to climb the steep and narrow road. Those who do so must exercise choice and selection, and do that to which they are not naturally inclined: and hence it is that there are few who find that strait gate, which can only be entered by means of spiritual strife, by struggling with temptation, by the resistance of Satan and of the works of Satan, by crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. These things are not easy—nay, they are impossible to the natural man; but they can be attained to, though only in one way. Let no one suppose that he may sit still and be guided into it—that cannot be; for with all God's desire that the wicked man should not perish, it is impossible that it can be otherwise unless he makes some exertion to avoid that fate. It is absolutely necessary that the power to resist should be sought, otherwise it will not be given. It is essential that every man should himself co-operate with God, or the Holy Spirit will endeavour in vain to find its way to a man's heart. Hence it is said, '*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate' (Luke xiii. 24). Cast away indolence, and indifference, and sloth, and 'laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith' (Heb. xii. 1). 'Let your loins be girded, and your lights burning' (Luke xii. 35). 'Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong' (1 Cor. xvi. 13). All these, and similar passages, point to an *active exertion*, a sustained endurance, which is doubtless painful and laborious, but which is none the less necessary to win the

prize, for which we are to strive—namely, to enter in at the strait gate, the narrow, difficult, and stony way, which leadeth unto life.

But there is the other side of the picture—for wide is the gate and broad the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Too easy, alas, and too wide! but what has made it so? It is man's own fall from goodness and truth, which has so changed his original character as to have given him a second nature far inferior to his first. If man was once in a state of holiness and spirituality, and even then fell into the love of self and the world, how shall he now escape? how return to his pristine goodness? The downward road is easy when once begun, but what shall we say of the upward path? No earthly power, no unaided wish or effort of man's, can restore him, or set him upon that ascending career. And then it is, that by his congenital tendency, he has placed himself like a rolling ball upon an inclined plane, and must take the broad road, which is terminated by its wide absorbing gate, admitting many, and only too accessible to all. In this road all walk by nature; and to this end would all come, but for grace.

But there are many things which are mercifully provided to check the downward progress. Trials, temptations, sickness, loss of friends or of fortune, and a thousand other means may intervene, in the Providence of God, to arrest the descending steps, to awaken the slumbering conscience, to give us pause, and make us bethink ourselves of what lies at the end. No man will be punished for following his natural bent, but every man is responsible for deliberate choice. It is not the inherited sin of our fallen parents which will alone take us to the wide gate, for God does not permit that any shall follow the broad path with closed eyes. Conscience is active, the workings of God's Spirit are perceptible, warnings are not wanting, and there are many landmarks in that descending path which recall to a soul, otherwise lethargic, the necessity of changing its course, ceasing in its downward pro-

gress, pausing in its headlong career, and first stopping, preparatory to a return in search of the narrower way.

Cease to do evil, and learn to do well ; this is the programme we ought all to set ourselves. To everyone it is equally necessary, on every one is equally incumbent. We cannot do good till we have ceased doing evil ; we cannot climb till we have done with falling. Let no man suppose that he can become good suddenly, but let him be content at first with ceasing to be evil, and the rest will follow in due course. Looked at from this standpoint, none need despair of ultimate success in regaining the upward path. It requires an exertion of the will, and it is too often mere indolence which keeps a man down ; mere obedience to unloved habit, mere slaving to despised custom and association, which urges a man forward without an effort to check himself—‘*Video meliora, deteriora sequor*’—‘When I would do good, evil is present with me.’ As St. Paul expresses his experience, ‘I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am !’ (might one in such plight well exclaim), ‘who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ (Rom. vii. 23, 24).

The only remedy, then, for this fatal declension, is *repentance*. True repentance is incompatible with further fall, and such repentance will be accompanied by such desire to find the narrow way, as will itself carry with it the Divine blessing, and render it comparatively easy. We have indeed ample encouragement that such will be the case, and that such a desire will be fully met by such facilities to carry out our good intentions, as will well repay the earnest trial ; for has not the prophet proclaimed, in the name of the Lord, ‘Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked *turn* from his way and live : *turn* ye, *turn* ye, from your evil ways : for why will ye die, O house of Israel?’ (Ezek. xxxiii. 11).

## LECTURE XIII.

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (*continued*).

#### 6. '*Consider the Lilies of the Field.*'

'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.'—MATT. vi. 28.

THIS passage, in its mere external sense, is a favourite one with many persons, on account of the beauty of the simple idea conveyed by it. It is beautiful in itself, and no less beautiful in its setting in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. He is speaking of the dependence which everyone ought to experience on the overlooking providence of their heavenly Father, which should lead the mind to feel indifference to all the changes and chances of this life, under the conviction that it is but a place of trial, where every material circumstance has but a factitious importance ; and where, while prosperity should not harden, neither should adversity cause anyone to repine. 'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for the body, what ye shall put on.' Necessary, indeed, was such teaching at a time when Roman gluttony and luxury set an evil example to the world—when men spent their time in costly feasting, and went softly, clad in purple and fine linen, crying aloud by their lives, if not with their voices : 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die !' 'Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ?' Meat and drink must of course be taken, to support the body, and clothing must be worn to protect it ; yet should we not place the former before the latter, and make that which is



subordinate to take the chief place. The abuse of all things is the ignoring of their use. All things, if used for their right end, are lawful; but when the use is neglected or forgotten, when the *end* is debased and the *means* exalted, then is it abuse.

Our Lord, however, here teaches that all that is necessary for the life of our bodies, and for our protection from surrounding influences, is given to us freely by the Lord: 'Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth *them*.' They take no thought beyond that which is necessary for their sustenance, and yet they live by the bounty of God. And if the very fowls of the air, of which we take no note—if they find all that is needful, by the unfailing goodness of our heavenly Father—without whom not one of them falls to the ground—how much more shall He supply His creature, man, with everything he requires, if only he will trust in Him, and not be too solicitous about his own part in the matter. His motto should be, 'The Lord will provide;' and except that he must not fall into the error of neglecting his own affairs, and making his belief a cloak for indolence and carelessness, the Christian should be content to leave all in God's hands, and in all cases to trust Him—thanking Him when blessings are showered upon him, and trusting Him in cases of difficulty and distress.

There are other lessons to be learned under the image just quoted; but these do not fall within the scope of this Lecture, except as preliminary to the consideration of the words of our text, wherein our Lord proceeds to take an illustration from the vegetable kingdom: 'Consider the lilies of the field.' Those who heard the Sermon on the Mount must have been indeed familiar with the lilies of the field. Many parts of Palestine are thickly covered with the splendid flowers of the scarlet Martagon lily—the Syrian lily, as it is now called; and the region of Galilee is particularly rich in its beautiful and brilliant red blossoms. It is a stately plant, and its turban-like



flowers form striking objects in April and May in those countries. There are, however, other lilies, such as the white lily and the lily of the valley; which latter, from their humility and beauty, may put in some claim to have been those used in the illustration; but probably the more striking forms of lily, whether red or white, would have been present to the minds of the illiterate populace, to whom the words were addressed: ‘Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.’ Probably but few of our Lord’s hearers had ever considered the lilies of the field before. They had seen lilies, had trodden them under foot, had beaten them down idly with their staffs as they passed by; but consider them! that they had never done. They were like the rustic of the northern poet:

‘A primrose by the river’s brim,  
A simple primrose ’twas to him,  
And it was nothing more.’

But our Lord’s admonition to consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, must have come upon their minds as a surprise. ‘True, beautiful they are, although we are so accustomed to see them, that we scarcely thought of that; but how do they grow? what brings them up from apparent death and extinction year after year? We see them die, and disappear in the autumn, and did we not know by experience that they would revive again in spring, we should think them quite gone, never to be again the glory of the field; and yet again they grow, again they unfold their beautiful flowers—but how? Listen what saith the Master?’ He says, ‘They toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. *Wherefore*, if *God* so clothe the grass of the field . . .’ It is God, then, that clothes the lilies with bright green leaves, and rich scarlet or white flowers. It is *God* who is their sun, and raises them from the dust to bloom in their season, with a magnificence which the great Solomon could scarcely boast in all his glory. ‘And shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith!’

Like all the teaching of our Lord, there are two meanings in this lesson—not two meanings in the sense of a *double entendre*, one of which is a play upon the other, or in any way antagonistic or contradictory to the other—but a meaning upon the surface, which the simplest may appreciate, and apply to themselves; and also a deeper spiritual meaning, which a man must learn from one who is competent to teach him. The simple lesson is patent to all. Let the unlearned even once regard the lilies of the field as the pensioners of the bounty of God; let them once perceive that the beauty of the flowers which spring up beneath the feet to spangle the turf, or to deck the forest glade, is a beauty which comes directly from the hand of God, and then will he remember that *he* also is one of God's creatures—one much more important, as a being endowed with sense and life, made in His image and after His likeness. And then, if he wisely applies the lesson, he must feel that the perfection of the flower of the field is but a shadow of the perfection which God wills in His creatures; that the care which He bestows upon the gorgeous blossoms is but a tithe of the care and protection which He extends over those whom He has created as recipients of His own divine qualities; and thus he will be brought, as Mungo Park on a memorable occasion was brought, to a loving trust in Him—to a renewed confidence in His protection; and he will go forth with strength of spirit, under the assured guidance of One who will do for everyone that which is best. He will remember that whatever his difficulties, whatever his dangers, whatever his wants, his heavenly Father knoweth that he has need of all these things. All these things, indeed, are of secondary and subordinate importance. However much they may appear to be needed, they are but of temporary value. But one thing is really needful: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' This was the simple lesson to the fishermen and common people taught by the Sermon on the Mount.

'And why take ye thought for raiment?' says our Lord,

preparatory to His beautiful illustration. Let it be remembered that throughout the Sermon on the Mount spiritual things are spoken of under natural emblems. Thus, *raiment* is of two kinds. The body is the natural raiment of the soul, while the raiment of the body is that which simply conceals and protects it; just, indeed, as the body conceals and protects the soul during our terrestrial life. Thus, garments have a good and a bad sense. A natural garment may be used as a simple concealment of an evil intent; and the natural body may in the same manner conceal the workings of the spirit within. This is easy enough in this world; nor can anyone know the quality of his neighbour, if he chooses to hide the evil thoughts of his heart under a suave and mild exterior; just as a prince may be disguised in rags, or a peasant in purple and ermine. But the spiritual clothing of the soul, which is here rather referred to, consists in those principles of truth and goodness in which each man lives, and which must be genuine and real, to bear comparison with the works of the Creator, such as the lilies of the field. Not self-righteousness, not any quality of soul which we derive from our own merit or goodness. Of such, Isaiah's expression may be used: 'All our righteousness is as filthy rags' (Isa. lxiv. 6). We are like a faded and shrivelled leaf, rather than the glorious flowers of the lilies of the field. Nor must our garment be a deceptive one, like the cloke of maliciousness, or of covetousness, referred to by the Apostles. True spiritual raiment must be formed by the principle of good, not grounded in the understanding alone, but wedded to the will and affections; so that there may be a perfect accord between the perception and the act.

But the lilies of the field are clothed by God—they 'are all glorious within.' Not like the works of man, which fail to bear close inspection—not like the most delicate coverings made by man's ingenuity, which appear coarse and rude when looked into more closely. Place under the microscope a piece of fine lace or cambric, and the fabric has the appearance of rough cordage—all its beauty is gone, and a clumsy interlacement of

coarse fibres is exposed to the view ; but place in the same position the petal of a lily, and it becomes more lovely by the increased power of vision. The delicacy of the coloured cell is brought out, the beautiful interlacing fibres, like threads of gold through a rich fabric, amaze and delight the observer ; and the closer he examines, the more he is struck with wonder at the sight. Such is ever the difference between the works of man and those of the Creator. And such, also, is the difference between a man's character which is only dependent upon himself, and one which has been humbly and carefully framed by the Divine aid. In the one case, it must necessarily be deceptive, weak, poor, inflated ; in the other, it should be, if help is properly sought, genuine, firm, strong, rich in grace, and beautiful with trusting humility. And the spiritual raiment corresponds to these diversities of character. Souls, like bodies, have their garments. Were it even that correspondence alone teaches us this, it must be evident. The body is adorned by rich raiment, in proportion to the dignity of office, and the rank of nobility. So, also, the soul is clad in an apparel which corresponds to the genuineness of its perceptions, its love of truth, and its delight in good. White raiment is always described as the apparel of angels. When the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and rolled away the stone from the sepulchre, and sat upon it, his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow—signifying the light of celestial truth which he embodied. And when our Lord Himself was transfigured upon the mount, His face shone as the sun, and His raiment became white as the light—to denote that, as the natural body is clothed in raiment, so ‘the inexpressible beauty of His Divine truth’ flowed from, and invested the Divine goodness.

Such spiritual raiment, then, must be derived from genuine truth, and must denote the true quality of the soul. They are, therefore, the gift of God, just as the clothing of the lilies of the field are also gifts directly from Him. Of them our Lord says, ‘They toil not, neither do they spin’—two expressions

well chosen, and full of meaning. For there are two ways of arriving at a knowledge of truth. The regenerate man has, by conflict and victory over temptations, and by persistent pursuit in the path of goodness and truth, brought his soul into such a condition that he is enabled to perceive truth, and to appreciate it, as it were, intuitively. This receptive power is the *gift of God* to those who are capable of receiving it ; and such only are thus capable who have become the followers of Christ as dear children. Good thoughts and perceptions of truth spring up like good seed in a rich soil ; and with no effort they are able to profit by the beautiful thoughts implanted in their souls by the Lord, and thus to endue themselves with the rich spiritual garments which the Lord provides, without their own anxiety or care ; just as the lilies do, which grow up to their natural beauty in freedom and spontaneously.

But there is another way of arriving at truth, though not of appropriating it, namely, by logical induction, by bringing together facts, by heaping together natural knowledge—or by unproductive faith, which *sees*, but *feels* not. All these means may be used by the self-dependent man, who may think that thereby he has become wise ; but his wisdom is in a great measure self-derived, and therefore worthless. Instead of coming direct from the Fount of all wisdom, by the aid of humble prayer and loving faith, it is the result of careful calculation, of ingenious speculation, of empty self-laudation ; whereas *real* truth is celestial in its nature, and all from the Lord.

How beautifully is this difference expressed by our Lord ! The lilies toil not, neither do they spin. The lilies do not, like these men, heap together dry facts, accumulate matters of knowledge with toil and labour, hoping thus to arrive at truth ; nor do they inductively build theories of truth from bare facts, or spin webs of doctrine from their accumulations of knowledge. They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet they are clothed in beauty by Him who looks less to the understanding than to the heart, and who has created and endowed them as

the emblems of simple faith and loving trust—of the pure in heart, and the right in spirit—of such as, laying aside the understanding of the worldly-wise, become as little children, receiving thankfully the benefits bountifully afforded by their heavenly Father, and imbibing, as it were, imperceptibly and spontaneously, draughts of pure and unadulterated truth from the wells of living water, at which they thus become qualified to drink freely. These are the lilies of the field. These are they, fashioned of God no less as to their interiors than as to their exteriors, and thus fitted to be transferred from their seasonal home in the field of earth, to the eternal spring of the Paradise of heaven.

But the robes of Solomon 'in all his glory' were earthly robes. Symbols they were of the royal power and magnificence conferred upon him by Jehovah; and so long as the heart was pure before God, the earthly robes would be unspotted, and fit symbols of spiritual garments. And yet they had a more definite spiritual correspondence—for 'the Jewish kings were representatives of the spiritual principle, clothed with the truths of intelligence and knowledge'—not, therefore, the highest principle, inasmuch as it is distinctly a step below the celestial principle, where clothing is not merely the comprehended truths of wisdom, but the perceptions of truths received into the inmost soul. The raiment of Solomon in all his glory, therefore, although excellent, necessarily fell short of the clothing of the simple lilies—emblems of celestial truth and goodness—and the mightiest and wisest prince, on the pinnacle of earthly glory, was not arrayed like one of these! What consolation is this for the humble and loving Christian! It may be his circumstances and position in this world are, in the eyes of the world, lowly, mean, ground down, and straitened by poverty. His clothing may be coarse and scanty—no purple or fine linen enfolds his limbs; a dinner of herbs may be more his custom than to fare sumptuously every day. And yet the *heart* trustful and simple; the will in accord with that of his heavenly Father; the desires tending to truth



and love ; the aspirations yearning after heavenly things ; the mind ever schooled to say, ‘Thy will be done.’ Such a man, however mean his earthly raiment, is weaving for himself celestial apparel more glorious than Solomon’s—unseen by mortal eyes, but which, when the husk falls off the ripe fruit, shall stand forth in all its glory like the lilies of the field. Such a man is preparing for himself a wedding garment, which shall be ready for him to put on at the supper of the Lamb, when, after all the toil of life, after all the trials, doubts, sufferings, temptations, partings, and tears of this troublous earthly career, he shall have come off more than conqueror, and be received into the eternal kingdom with the welcome, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord !’



## LECTURE XIV.

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (*continued*).

#### 7. '*Behold the Fowls of the Air.*'

'Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?'—MATT. vi. 26.

No one who has the Christian's faith can fail to perceive that there is an adaptation of things in the world about us. We see that world to be the abode of many besides ourselves ; many, that is, who, although totally out of our own sphere, we must yet believe (if we give the matter any consideration at all) to be animated by hopes and fears, to have their joys and their sorrows, to possess individual interests as powerful as our own—to be, in fact (although utterly and for ever beyond our personal and immediate knowledge), counterparts of ourselves. And yet how seldom do we stop to reflect upon it ; how seldom, even when these counterparts meet us in our daily life, do we give them the tithe of the thought and consideration which we expend upon ourselves ! Our own joys and our own sorrows are sufficient and all-absorbing ; our own lot has an interest for us, not only outrivalling that of any other, but even thrusting aside the good or evil fortune which appeals from without to our sympathy and consideration. Self, indeed, rules the world now as ever ; and few there are who can be said, like the three children, to refuse to bow the knee to the golden image.

But besides ourselves, the world of nature is ever before us, and therein we may learn much. For all created things which have the gift of life have also, in minor and graduated degrees, their

joys and their sorrows, which even we of highest intelligence can in some measure judge and appreciate. We see in the vegetable world the trees opening their buds and throwing out their leaves and blossoms under the genial influence of returning spring, flourishing in their umbrageous shades under the still heats of summer, gasping and drooping when the chill blasts of autumn begin to proclaim the season of decay and death. We see the beautiful flowers springing out of the dust of an apparent death, under the bright skies of the opening year. We see them arrayed, more grandly than Solomon in all his glory, in the shady recesses of the wood, or by the wild brook-side ; on the Alpine height, no less than in the gay and blooming parterres of the cultivated garden ; and again fading and vanishing, whether in a state of nature or under the skilful and careful protection of their loving tenders and cultivators. Conscious life, perhaps, they have not, and yet they look gay. They flourish ; they are lovely in the sun of prosperity and happiness, and they fade and die when it is withdrawn for a season.

Still more does the animal world claim our attention, because we admit for them feeling and emotions, as well as at least a substitute for reason. They have with us much in common that is good, as unfortunately we have with them much in common that is evil. But some of the best traits of our own natural life are shared by them, and not only shared, but they even put us to shame by their industry, their activity, their temperance, their maternal affection. The ant is a lesson to the sluggard, as the early lark is to the indifferent and slothful in business ; and all alike teach us to be moderate in our desires, patient under our adversities, forgiving under our injuries, and careful for those who are helpless and dependent upon our love.

When our Lord called the attention of the disciples to the fowls of the air, as illustrations of His doctrine, He implied no blame to them of improvidence, that they neither sowed nor reaped, gathered nor stored. Rather the

reverse, for He taught that a man might be too careful of means, and too careless of ends—too thoughtful concerning his own provision, and not thoughtful enough concerning the provision made for us by a higher and superior Power. The birds of the air are the creatures of impulse, now soaring to heaven, now descending to earth, which they adorn with their presence and enliven with their songs. They find a banquet ever spread for them, of which they may partake freely. We are accustomed to see them flying across our path, to listen to them with pleasure ; but do we stop to consider their history ? They are to most of us simply the fowls of the air, scarce worthy of our notice ; but if we do pause to behold them—if we do for a moment think whence they derive their subsistence, we learn a lesson which it is good for us to understand, and to acknowledge—the lesson of dependence—the lesson of trust.

For the fowls of the air are the pensioners of God ; they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns ; but they are not in want ; they have no resources beyond the everyday picking up of crumbs—for each day sufficient, and each day renewed, like the manna of the wilderness. The God who created them does not neglect them, but endows them with power to use their instinct and their organs with one accord to supply themselves with the bounteous stores of food at Nature's table. The food sometimes ceases, and they die ; but they do not die without the Father's knowledge, or the Creator's care. He watches over all His works—even over the sparrows upon the housetop. Your heavenly Father feedeth them ; and will He not feed you ? Your heavenly Father forgetteth not them, and will He forget you ? Are you not much better than they ? Behold, you are of more value than many sparrows. Be of good cheer, then ; for as the less is included in the greater, so must your life and your well-being occupy the loving thoughts and watchful care of Him who considereth the meanest of His creatures as not unworthy of His Divine forethought and never-ceasing aid.

These are some of the thoughts which must have been raised, and evidently raised of set purpose, in the minds of those who listened to this, and other doctrines, contained in the Sermon on the Mount. To Him all Nature was an open book. He not only knew the bearings of each section of it upon our own life, character, and aspirations, but He also best knew their application, and how to use it; and repeatedly in His parables He adduces images from the natural world to enforce the lessons of His love and wisdom upon His hearers. In this respect, indeed, He set His seal of authority upon the truth of those best teachers who have, as it were, instinctively appealed to Nature in a lesser degree for the illustrations of their teaching; from Job, the ancient patriarch, to Shakespeare, the comparatively modern poet of a century or two back. Thus says Job, 'But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee' (Job xii. 7, 8). And doth not our own great poet, as usual, hold the mirror up to Nature, when he endows it with—

'Tongues in the trees—books in the running brooks—  
Sermons in stones—and good in everything !'

'Who teacheth *us*,' again says Job (xxxv. 11), 'more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh *us* wiser than the fowls of heaven?' And if we are so much wiser than the fowls of heaven, surely we shall not be outdone by them in trust and confidence in our common Maker. No more powerful argument for our superiority over the birds of the air could be used than that of our Lord Himself, when He said, 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?' We are indeed, in His sight, of more value than many sparrows. And thus is the poet's grand description of humanity vindicated from any vain self-esteem or vulgar vanity, as the highest and noblest of the works of the All-wise and All-good: 'What a piece of work is *man*! How noble in reason; how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in

apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!' Nor is there anything in this wonderful apostrophe which too highly extols the Creator's crowning work; and the only qualification which is necessary to temper a misplaced self-glorification is the remembrance of the axiom that 'A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.'

If, then, we are justified in thus regarding man as the special work and crowning care of God Himself, it necessarily follows that we ought to have full confidence that such a work is no capricious toy, to be cast aside in apathy and neglect, but a precious and valuable object of never-ceasing regard, and watchful providence on the part of Him who called us into being, and so wonderfully endowed us. And be it remembered that, in one sense, all mankind are equally endowed. I do not mean, of course, that every man is capable of the same intellectual exercise in the world, of an equal comprehension and appreciation of matters seen or unseen in his present condition. Here we are surrounded by influences which in one case stunt and dwarf the faculties—in another, afford them free scope and exercise. But this is one of those things which, while it may somewhat puzzle us now, affords no inapt illustration of the necessity of a faith and trust in God, as a consequence of a belief in Him.

When, however, it is advanced that all men are equally endowed, it means that we are all children of one common father—and the children of the same parent fare alike in their father's house. They are equal, they are all the children of the house; and although temporary circumstances may appear to favour one more than another, they have the same rank, and are united in a common bond. So with men in general; they are endowed with body and soul alike. The body may be weaker in one than in another, but the body is but the temporary tenement of the soul; the weakness of the body *may* be the especial blessing which may be destined to guide the soul to its true and proper home. If the Father is

what we believe Him to be—an all-wise and infinitely loving Father, then must His working and His plan, however obscure to us, be positively and decidedly the best. He wills that none should perish, but that all should come into eternal life ; why, then, should we quarrel with the means He takes, and the ways He adopts ? Why should we exclaim against the trials which He sends, just as children exclaim against the medicine which is to heal their disease ? Are we, or He, the best able to judge ? is the question which we seldom ask ourselves, simply because we are usually unwilling to be guided by a rational reply.

The difficulty with us all is, to realize our own condition. The world around us seems so genuine—so real ; the things which we see and feel appear to be so solid, and so tangible ; the sufferings we undergo seem so grievous, and so hopeless ; the pleasures we enjoy seem so all-absorbing at the moment, so priceless in our eyes, that we cannot, without severe schooling, be taught that they are really of very secondary importance. These, we think we can realize, but not what is future—what is unseen—what appears uncertain ; although in our heart of hearts we know it to be sure. All this we are content only to glance at, to hold with a light hand, as if it were the shadow, and the present the substance. It requires self-control, a powerful, and not inborn self-restraint, to relax our hold upon the joys of the present, in order to fix them more firmly upon the promises of the future. We want faith, all of us ; we profess it, but we have it not ; we want a conviction that 'the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal ;' we lack the trust which a child should have in a father, and the confidence that in all things he will be guided, not by caprice, or self-interest, or temporary unkindness—but always, and without exception, by perfect sincerity, by wisdom infinite, and by love unchangeable.

Nor are all equally endowed as to mental gifts, for there is every diversity ; and it seems hard that some should appear to be cursed with special proclivities to evil, as it were, from



their very organization, while in others the soul is clouded and incapable of expansion from a mere defect in the shaping of its receptacle. These are, indeed, trials and puzzles, only to be removed by faith—by a firm trust and reliance that our Father knows it, and forgets it not; that there is One who has not chosen it, but permitted it for special ends He has in view; and that out of it He will work good. In the case of those whose difficulties arise from an inherited or organic defect, we must regard it as something not without its use—a special form of temptation or trial, perhaps, which may or may not be resisted, but whose resistance cannot fail to work beneficially. Thus says the Apostle to the Hebrews: ‘Wherefore . . . let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith’ (Heb. xiii. 1). We are all weighted, more or less, for none are perfect; each has his weakness—his sin, to which he is more prone than to others; but with the knowledge of it comes the desire to throw it off; and the knowledge comes with self-examination. We are a fallen race in more senses than one—fallen by hereditary sin, and doubtless fallen by the frailty of our bodies; and much of the evil and misery of the world are due to the accumulated influences of evil in the soul, which have thrown their fatal shadow upon a diseased and imperfect organization. And for those unfortunates whose souls are benighted, entirely apart from their own responsibility or blame, can we not trust our heavenly Father for justice, at least such as we look for from an earthly father? If such are tended with loving hands on earth, may we not be sure they will be looked on with pity from heaven? and their martyrdom to an hereditary evil ended, and the soul emancipated from its sin-bound dwelling, will they not be as children, their souls a virgin page, and their robes as pure as was the leprous body of Naaman, which, after dipping seven times in Jordan, became like that of a little child? ‘If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall



your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?' (Matt. vii. 11).

But it must not be forgotten that this implicit reliance upon God (should it be ever granted to us), does not release us from duties, from action, or from the performance of deeds in our own behalf, any more than in behalf of others. It might be that such a faith becomes degenerated to a mere excuse for idleness and sloth. 'Cast all your care upon Him' does not mean that we are to exercise no care for ourselves. 'Take no thought for the morrow' does not mean that we are to be careless and indifferent what becomes of us, and to throw all responsibility upon an unseen power. These are the errors of fanatics and unpractical devotees, who, through a weakness of intelligence, and a fallacious sophism, contrive to put a literal interpretation upon a favourite passage, and entirely disregard the context. To what follies has not this given rise in all ages, and among all sects, from Brahminism to Roman Catholicism! To what bootless self-macerations, and self-tortures!

The Sermon on the Mount is regarded by some as unpractical and impossible, simply from this contracted view, taken in a more or less mistaken sense even by men of high intelligence, but yet who may in all cases be shown to have grave deficiencies in their mental training or constitution. For the Sermon on the Mount is like the Christian religion generally—it lies not in the letter, but in the spirit. The Sermon on the Mount, taken solely in the letter, would be unpractical and impossible in a work-a-day world; but taken in the spirit it has the beauty of holiness—it is the essence of true morality—the unfailing guide of the Christian's life. It does not teach us to rest, like lotos-eaters, in a garden of careless ease; nor does it demand that we should render ourselves systematically miserable and unhappy as an article of faith or doctrine; but it teaches us that of two ways, one is good, and the other is bad; it teaches us to eschew the evil and to choose the good; it supplements our interior conscience, and enforces right where our conscience wavers; it meets every case, because it is spiritual in its nature; it is

infallible and perfect, because it is Divine. True, all cannot use it equally ; it is not to all the same infallible guide—simply because all are not equally schooled—all are not equally advanced in the heavenly life. But the more they progress therein, the more valuable and essential it becomes to them, the more precious, the more beloved. And to such, it is clear that no merely passive obedience to it is required—but an active and living acknowledgment and co-operation. The birds of the air do not sow nor reap, it is true, but they are not idle ; they do not, although dependent upon their Maker for food, sit and mope and expect it to be thrust into their mouths ; the food is there for them to seek, and they seek it, and are satisfied.

So should we also actively apply our faculties in the way intended by our Father ; so should we exercise an active trust in Him who will never fail us at our need ; so should we ever seek, and ask, and knock. For in this same universal code we read : ‘ Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened ’ (Matt. vii. 7, 8).

## LECTURE XV.

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (*continued*).

#### 8. *The Houses built on the Rock and on the Sand.*

‘Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock : and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell not : for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand : and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell : and great was the fall thereof.’—MATT. vii. 24-27.

A NEW era in the history of the world was inaugurated when our Lord had preached the Sermon on the Mount. The old morality, which had been inculcated from time immemorial, received thereby its death-blow, and a new doctrine, no less remarkable than novel, was announced in its place. Hitherto there had not been wanting teachers, who, with enlightened minds, and with humane dispositions, had proclaimed that a man best fulfilled the duties of life, not only by showing mercy and compassion to his fellow-creatures, but also by devoting his best abilities to the amelioration of their condition. But in the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord for the first time taught that entire self-abnegation which is the distinctive character of the Christian religion. Former philosophers, who had been conspicuous for the breadth of their views, and the comprehensiveness of their charity, had taught up to the standard of their own natural lights ; they had been men admirable in every sense of the word, who had, by their own God-imparted tenderness of heart towards their fellow-creatures,

stretched out their arms towards the light, and had received a measure of that illumination of their understandings which had enabled them to proclaim true and noble axioms and exhortations, as the result of their heaven-directed aspirations and contemplations; and the world owes an immeasurable debt of gratitude to these old philosophers—whether they be Confucius in China, or Buddha in India, or Zoroaster in Persia, or Plato and Socrates in Greece—for these men, each in his turn, fanned and kept alive the spark of virtue and morality, which had doubtless added many a myriad to the host of those who worship around the great white throne. Such men are in every country among the chiefs of those who stand out like beacon-lights in the history of great nations, and have attracted by the blamelessness of their lives, and by the inherent beauty of their philosophy, all those who, in their day, loved mercy, and did justice, and who, according to the measure of knowledge granted to them, lived in holiness, and walked in singleness of heart.

But these illustrious men—who lived in times of darkness, and were surrounded by heathen nations for the most part idolatrous and immersed in the grossest naturalism—were but imperfect exponents of the great principles of truth, and justice, and mercy, which it was their delight to inculcate. Yet although members of heathen and idolatrous communities, their minds were too elevated to share in the grossnesses of the ignorant and uncultivated people around them; their minds saw God as a great, supreme, and spiritual Being; although they had no sufficient revelation to enable them to proclaim all His glorious attributes of love and wisdom, as we know them at this day. They were heathen, though not idolaters—and we cannot help feeling that these men must have been, in their day, recipients to some extent, of a special outpouring of Divine influence; that they received—though not without measure (as only Christ could do)—but yet in some measure, a portion of the Holy Spirit of God, for the especial purpose of keeping alive in the midst of vast heathen, though civilized, communities, the knowledge of the great principles of good and truth—and the desire to

follow, though it might be afar off, the great exemplar whom they but dimly saw through the darkness of surrounding ignorance, and through the mist of coming centuries.

But that which these men saw dimly—that which they groped for with a certain modest measure of success, stood forth revealed in all its brightness of truth, and in all its glory of Divine signification, when our Lord preached his Sermon on the Mount. Then for the first time were codified, as it were, all the maxims of the purest morality, all the axioms of elevating philosophy and ennobling virtue, with which men had at any time become acquainted ; but they were refined by the infusion into them of a spirit of Divine Truth, purged of all that lingered in them of self, or of the baseness of an earthly dross, purified of all that was false in principle or imperfect in practice, and spiritualized by their direct emanation from the Source of all light, the Spring of all intelligence, and the Fountain of all wisdom. In this wonderful discourse we have, not dogmas to make men clever polemics, not even doctrine to make them wise theologians, but plain rules for holy living, simple and unerring directions for the conduct of Christian walk and conversation, spiritual food for the daily life and needs of the soul, and an infallible guide for all those whose pure desire it is to obey the dictates of a good heart, and to walk humbly with their God.

Well might His hearers have been astonished at His doctrine—well might they exclaim, ‘Never man spake like this man!’ For not only did He teach them what was good and upright—not only did He inculcate virtue, and justice, and spirituality, and humility—not only did He say, ‘He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!’ but He also laid it upon them that it behoved them to be not hearers only of His words, but doers also ; and when He had, at length, concluded His Divine sermon, He more strongly than ever affirms this absolute necessity in the concluding words of His great exhortation.

How easy it is to hear the words of wisdom ! How naturally they flow into our outward understanding ! How much they

commend themselves to our judgment ! and with what avidity do many of us listen to the honeyed accents which convey to our minds the conviction of truth ! All of us who are educated and cultivated profess to be seekers after truth ; all of us would be glad to drink from a fountain of truth, and to store our minds with suggestive wisdom. And Truth is of so fascinating a nature that the more we possess of it, the more we desire it ; for that which we do possess only suggests further glimpses of that which lies beyond. But the truth which most men so earnestly covet, is abstract truth—truth which shall enrich their minds and understandings ; intellectual truth, which is doubtless excellent in its degree, but which may be, according to the constitution of our minds, and too often is, entirely separated from good.

There is, however, another kind of truth of a widely different nature, no less attractive, no less fascinating, but which carries with it also results of a supreme character, and responsibilities of the highest importance. I mean, of course, Spiritual Truth. Of this, in fact, it may be said, that while it embraces all other truth, it is the soul of which Natural Truth is but the body, and lifeless, without the animating principle of spiritual truth. For all Truth is from the same Divine Source ; but the natural, divorced from the spiritual, is no less useless and dead, than is the material body without its animating soul. Spiritual truth is far-reaching, all-embracing ; spiritual truth is not the end alone, but the means and the end too, by which we may be born, and by which we may live ; spiritual truth carries with it grave responsibilities, for the possession of it makes or mars a man in proportion as he uses or misuses it—profits by it, or neglects it ; spiritual truth must not be received into the external understanding only, it must be brought forth also into the life. In a word, the receiver of spiritual truth is bound not to be a *hearer* only, but he must also be a *doer* of it.

Our Lord has left us a series of discourses, of which we have the pith and marrow given us by Matthew, in the 5th, 6th and 7th chapters of his Gospel. We cannot suppose that those



three brief chapters contain all that our Lord told the multitudes on these occasions. Doubtless His sayings, which to us, even, are not always at first well understood, addressed as they were to a people to whom they were entirely new and startling, were illustrated, as His manner was, by parables, and by striking appeals, such as He could so well thrust home to the hearts of His hearers. He did not leave Himself without witness, and if He said sometimes what seemed a hard saying, He seldom left it in its naked difficulty, but, at all events as far as the comprehension and spirit of his hearers would allow, He opened its inner sense to them. So in this Sermon on the Mount, while much that He told them is not set down in the Gospel narrative, all the main features of it are doubtless represented, and we have in it a body of spiritual truth, such as is fully sufficient to indicate and characterize the Christian doctrine ; and if put into practice, to carry the Christian safely through this probationary state to the haven of his desires. Independently of its spiritual and internal signification, which can be seen only in proportion as one is in a spiritual condition, there is a spirit in its very letter which all may perceive—the spirit of justice and of mercy, the spirit of holiness and godliness, the spirit of purity and meekness, the spirit of genuineness and truth, the spirit of love and trust, the spirit of self-denial and of self-devotion ; and which rose up in judgment against the prevalent hypocrisy and self-righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees who were among its carping but conscience-stricken hearers.

To all His sayings the multitude had listened with profound attention ; their understanding comprehending, it may be often but dimly, the bearing and drift of His instruction ; their affections, in many cases, also doubtless moved by the principles of goodness and truth which appealed to something in their inmost natures, which had hitherto lain dormant for want of some soul-piercing sound, which the hollow teaching of the synagogues had failed to afford. ‘The common people heard Him gladly’—they who were to a certain extent unsophisticated, unspoiled ; unlike their teachers, whose hard and self-reliant



intellects had been trained into conflict with the affections of the will, and whose unyielding minds, in the pride of self-derived and self-appropriated intelligence, stood, strangers to humility, upon a vainglorious pinnacle, from which they overlooked the true principles of wisdom blended with meekness and self-negation, which those only could perceive who sat at the feet of Jesus. These saw the truth; they saw the difference between the shadow and the reality, between the spurious and the genuine, between the false and the true: and they said, 'This man teaches with authority, and not as the Scribes.'

Therefore did our Lord, ere He brought his teachings to a conclusion, by a forcible comparison, impress upon His hearers, that it was not enough that they should be hearers of His doctrines; that it was not enough that His sayings should commend themselves to their understandings; but that the very hearing of these sayings had brought with it a responsibility. He did not simply tell them that the mere hearing of His words would be of no benefit to any; so that unless they did them, they might as well not have heard them; but He declared, that while he who heard them and did them also, was as one whose house was builded upon a rock; the man who heard them and did them not, was as one who built a house indeed, but a house which was destined to fall—one which must, sooner or later, inevitably collapse, and be brought to ruin; and when it did fall, great would be the fall thereof!

Such is the solemn teaching of our text, and this we will endeavour further to elucidate in what remains of this Lecture.

However irrational it may seem to most of us, that of those who heard Him preach, any should have thought it unnecessary to carry into practice the precepts of our Lord, it would appear still more strange that any should be found in these days who are in a similar passive condition. And yet what is more common at the present time than that men should know the truth, and yet be averse to practise it? Who does not know the truth among us? What man in a Christian land can pretend that he is not acquainted with the teachings of the

Gospel? Men and women receive these teachings with their mother's milk; but in how few do they penetrate beyond the understanding! in how few do they reach the heart! Our Lord left free the wills of His hearers. It was no part of His providential scheme to force their inclinations, or to bind their affections in unison with their intellects. 'If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments,' not otherwise; and love is not to be forced any more than it is to be purchased. No love is worth having, or is worthy of the name, which is not free and spontaneous; so that although the Lord could control the affections as easily as He enlightens the intellect, He does not do so; He only sets before men the beauty of truth, and points out the responsibilities they incur if they refuse to accept and embrace it, and then he leaves them to choose. Doubtless, He does this not once or twice—He does it so often, so lovingly, so persuasively, and so earnestly, that the man who refuses to hear is without excuse.

But this unwillingness to do as well as to hear, is not characteristic of any particular age, or of any special Church. It is the great failing of our nature, which is pleased with the glitter of great truths which flatter the understanding; which readily embraces the intellectual conquest of a difficulty heretofore obscure; which delights in widening the area of its view of the causes of things; and, in short, is willing to receive Truth to any extent, so long as it does not entail trouble and responsibility. That is another matter; that is irksome and undesirable, and so the talent lies hidden in a napkin, and brings forth no fruit.

Nor is this apathy a feature of the individual only, but this it is, which has so blanched the life, so paralyzed the energies of the so-called Church, whose sandy foundation is laid upon that unscriptural, false, and dead doctrine of faith alone. What an easy doctrine is this! How it commends itself to the careless, the indifferent, the indolent, the worldly-minded! How simple, and how convenient! Only have faith—only believe—and the righteousness of Christ (say they) will be imputed

to you. What could be more satisfactory? what could more comfortably meet the requirements of those whose understandings are touched, whose intellects are soothed, by the recognition of the principles of goodness and truth; but whose affections remain unswayed, whose passions remain untamed and uncurbed, and whose worldly and evil lives take new license from their false security, and their vaunted immunity? These are they of whom He says: 'And why call ye Me Lord, and do not the things that I say?' These are they who make the Word of God of none effect—who stultify the teachings of our Lord; the dead members of a dead Church. True it is that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. xi. 6)—true it is that faith cometh by hearing—and hearing, by the Word of God (Rom. x. 17); but it is no less true that faith without works *is dead*, BEING ALONE (James ii. 17), and 'though a man say he hath faith, and have not works—can faith save him?' asks the Apostle (James ii. 14). And common-sense, no less than the most exalted reason, and the whole tenour of revelation consentaneously thunder NO! Yet it is not difficult to lull men's minds into a condition of security. The carnal mind finds it a suitable doctrine; men are ready to meet it half-way; and thus it falls out that when their spiritual advisers, their pastors and teachers set it before them, and preach it unreservedly to them, they eagerly embrace it, to the destruction of true religion, and to the signal hindrance of Christ's kingdom upon earth.

For a true Religion and a true Church should demand of its members that its doctrines and principles should not only remain enshrined in the understanding, but should also be brought into the life. Following in all things the precepts of our Lord, not so much in their literal as in their true and spiritual sense, such a Church should bind all who come within its influence to be not hearers only, but doers of the Word—and also consistent and hearty doers; with no mental reservations, no indolent shifts, no hypocritical shams. Having that true light that enlighteneth every man; having clearly demon-

strated to its members that God is a Spirit—it should also enjoin upon every man in the most binding manner, that they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

If there were no other passage in the whole Bible, expressive of these views, the concluding verses of Matthew vii. would be sufficient to establish them beyond dispute. They are here so clearly enunciated, so forcibly illustrated, and at the same time so indisputably genuine, that they should carry conviction to the minds of everyone. It is our Lord Himself who is speaking; it is the application He Himself enforces, by most powerful similes, as the end and moral of the most wonderful discourse which was ever heard by human ears. And what says He? ‘Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock.’ He, our Saviour, would liken him to a *wise* man.

When Solomon, in his unspoiled innocence, first sat upon the throne of his father David, he confessed himself but a little child, and in reply to the Lord’s gracious invitation: ‘Ask what I shall give thee,’ he said, ‘Give thy servant an understanding heart.’ And God commended him, that he had not asked for riches and honour; and gave him, not only a wise and understanding heart, but also honour and riches and length of days—provided he would walk in His laws, to keep them. ‘Seek ye first,’ says our blessed Saviour (Matt. vi. 33), ‘the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.’

The test here applied by our Lord to the man’s wisdom is, that he built his house upon a *rock*. What more stable than a rock! a solid, immovable rock—part and parcel of the firmly-founded earth! How often does the Psalmist rejoice and sing of the Rock of his salvation! ‘Thou art my strong rock, and my fortress;’ ‘God only is my rock;’ ‘the rock of my strength;’ ‘God is the rock of my heart, and my portion for ever;’ ‘the rock of my refuge;’ ‘be Thou unto me for a rock of habitation;’ ‘Who is a rock save our God?’ In all these and other pas-

sages he recognises the strength and impregnability of God as a defence to those who put their trust in Him ; just as, in a rocky country like Palestine, the rocks were places of refuge to which they fled for safety, in case of any sudden attack of an enemy.

But there is a yet deeper meaning in the expression 'Rock'—a meaning which was recognised long before—and in the song of Moses, in Deuteronomy xxxii. 2-4, he exclaims : 'My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass ; because I will publish the name of the Lord ; ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the *Rock*, His work is perfect ; for all His ways are judgment : a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.' Here we have indicated that which is the correct interpretation of the word *Rock* in all parts of Scripture. It signifies *Truth*—and the Lord is called the Rock, because He is Truth itself. From the Rock of Horeb, water was made to flow, because water corresponds to Truth, and represents that living water of which our Lord said : 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life' (John iv. 14).

When Simon Peter gave utterance to that great, and everlasting, and all-important truth, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' Jesus said unto him, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this *rock* I will build my Church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Matt. xvi. 18). Not that our Lord built His Church upon a man—still less so upon so frail an one as Peter. The gates of hell did prevail against Peter, at least for the time ; for with cursing and swearing he denied his Lord ; but our Lord made Peter a representative of the rock on which His Church was to be built, changing His name from Simon (which meant obedience) to Peter (which meant a rock). But the rock our Lord referred to was not the mortal man, Peter—but the cardinal truth which he confessed ; a truth which flesh

and blood had not revealed, but the Father which is in heaven; no mere perishable and material rock, but the eternal and spiritual Rock, 'and that Rock was Christ' (1 Cor. x. 4).

This then is the Rock upon which the wise man is to build; this is the sure foundation which alone can give stability and solidity; this is the foundation which our Lord recommends as that alone which will not fail a man in the hour of need. As saith the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. iii. 11), 'For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'

It is to be observed that our Lord likens him who heareth and doeth His sayings to a wise man who not merely reposed in the safety and security of this rock, but who built a house upon it—that is to say, who steadily, step by step, raised an edifice upon it. Brick by brick, stone by stone, and tier by tier, he raised it above the rock, which was its foundation, crowning it with a goodly roof, and putting the corner-stone to a durable and solid habitation. And just as a man builds a house in this world, of earthly and temporary materials, in which he may dwell as to his earthly body, so does he build another house of spiritual materials which shall last for ever, 'a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens' (2 Cor. v. 1). Step by step, by appropriating the goods and truths of the Word, by the practice of the spiritual virtues of love to the Lord and love to his neighbour, by singleness of heart, by the firm resistance of temptation, and by the exercise of Christian graces, and all things proper for *edification*, he builds up an edifice, which shall be prepared for him in the world to come, where he shall find his spiritual edifice transformed into a mansion of gold and crystal and precious stones, which are the spiritual correspondencies of goodness and faith and truth.

Such a house as this, built on a rock, is alone fitted to withstand the shocks and the batteries of spiritual enemies. For as a man's house here must be of such a character as to defy the conflicts of the elements—the wind, the rain, and the flood; solid enough to resist the gusts of winter storms, the washing of autumnal rains; strong enough in its base to be proof against



the sapping of its foundations by the resistless and unlooked-for flood ; so must his spiritual habitation be strong enough to bear the assaults of temptations and suggestions of evil and falsity represented by these forces of nature. The rains here referred to are not those gentle showers and refreshing dews which denote the truths of peace and the blessings of innocence—but downpours of desolating falsities which try the soul with threats of destruction of its faith : the winds which beat upon the house are not those soft breezes and fanning zephyrs which represent the life of heaven flowing in from Jehovah—but storms of fantasies and cupidities which assault the soul, and would, if they prevailed, lead to its utter destruction : and the floods which would sap the foundations, are not those genial overflows of grace which bring forth into life, and fructify, the dormant seeds of love and wisdom in the soul—but inundations of false persuasions, direful temptations, and evil influences, which would entirely immerse the soul, and suffocate its remains of good even to spiritual extinction, were they not provided against by a firm and solid foundation upon the Rock of Divine Truth.

Such are the benefits which the wise man derives from building his house upon a rock ; for in spite of all these temptations, *it fell not*. Nothing else could preserve it from destruction but trust in the Lord, ‘looking unto Jesus, who is the Author and finisher of our faith.’ And if we thus look to Him, not trusting to our own strength, He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it ; and that thus our rock-founded house may stand.

But the foolish man heareth, and doeth not, and all is otherwise with him. The Word has entered into his understanding, but it has no hold upon his heart. Temptations confront him, and having no stability, he yields ; the powers of darkness assail him, and having no rock of defence, he falls an easy prey. He is one who seeking his own advantage, has dishonoured God, and of such He says, ‘They that despise Me



shall be lightly esteemed' (1 Sam. ii. 30). 'Wherefore saith the Lord, Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips, but have removed their heart far from Me, therefore the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid' (Isa. xxix. 13). These are the wicked, of whom the patriarch Job declares, 'Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood' (Job xxii. 15, 16). These are they in which the Word taketh no root, 'who, if they for a while believe, yet in time of temptation fall away;' whose foundation is laid on the shifting sand of an isolated verbal faith, and mere intellectual science; and whose superstructure therefore is probably little better than wood, hay, or stubble. Of such an edifice, a wall daubed with untempered mortar, and its destruction, the Prophet Ezekiel gives a vivid picture (in xiii. 13, 14), 'Therefore thus saith the Lord God, I will even rend it with a stormy wind in My fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in Mine anger, and great hailstones in My fury to consume it. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the Lord.'

How consistent are all these statements; how they all agree with our Lord's teaching, and tend to show us that however we may attempt to deceive ourselves—however much we may soothe our consciences with this opiate of an unproductive and unfructifying faith, the truth stands written against us in words which nothing can efface. When a certain woman lifted up her voice to bear witness to the wondrous teaching of our Lord, and said unto Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked,' He said, 'Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and *keep* it' (Luke xi. 27, 28). Not once, nor twice does our Lord declare this to us. It is a cardinal fact—a doctrinal axiom.

‘If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye *do them*’ (John xiii. 17).

Blessed, happy, wise ; these are the words our Lord applies to those who hear and do ! Who would not be among the number of those *blessed* who hear the Word of God, and *keep* it — of those *happy* who know the things of God, and *do* them — of those *wise* who build their house upon a rock ; so that, in the words of the Prophet Isaiah (lix. 19), ‘When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.’

## LECTURE XVI.

### ‘I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE.’

‘They said therefore unto Him, What sign showest Thou then, that we may see, and believe Thee? what dost Thou work? Our Fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.’—JOHN vi. 30-34.

THERE is perhaps no greater proof of the hardness of heart, and of the unbelief of the people with whom our Lord had to deal, than is afforded by the words of the first of these verses. One would imagine that He had given them no proof of His superiority—no sign that He was not as other men. For they ask Him, saying, ‘What sign showest Thou, that we may see and believe?’ They claimed the low standard of belief of the Apostle Thomas. They professed that, seeing, they would believe—and yet they forgot that they had already seen, and yet had not believed. For had the Lord shown no sign? Had He done no work, that they thus taunted Him? Do we not read, even in the record of this same Evangelist, St. John, that a beginning of miracles had been done by Him, at Cana of Galilee, when the water became a rich wine at His command?—that here He manifested forth His glory—and with what result? We read that His disciples believed on Him. This wonder, so strange and unusual—so craved for by the carping Jews, caused, after all, no feeling of belief in their hearts. It was only the disciples, already His in heart, whose belief was

confirmed by the miracles. The Samaritans, even, believed when they heard His marvellous talk with the woman at the well ; but when, a little later, He had miraculously healed the nobleman's son at Capernaum—when He had restored the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, who had been a cripple for thirty-eight years—these thankless and stiff-necked Jews still asked Him, 'What sign showest Thou then, that we may see and believe Thee? what dost Thou work?' Truly might our blessed Lord then have said, as He said upon another occasion, 'If they will not believe Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead.'

Again, those who thus carpingly opposed our Lord, continue their objections by saying, 'Our fathers did eat manna in the desert ; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' By bringing forward this triumph of their ancient leader, they evidently intended to draw an unfavourable comparison between Jesus and Moses ; they could not bear the idea that this man, born among themselves, should carry off the palm ; nor, indeed, would they allow that there was any virtue in Him. They said, in effect, 'Who art Thou, compared with Moses, who led our forefathers through the desert, and brought them to the promised land?'—or as, on another occasion, they exclaimed, 'Art Thou greater than our father Abraham?' And yet how foolish—how illogical were their complaints and taunts ! True, when they would otherwise have starved in the desert, the Lord had said to Moses, 'Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you' (Ex. xvi. 4), but Moses nowhere claimed to have given the manna himself. And moreover, the discontented people so little valued the heaven-sent food, that they complained, saying, 'Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely—the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away : there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes' (Numb. xi. 4, 6). Yet now they can say, 'Our fathers did eat manna in the desert ; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to

eat'—and could appeal to this miracle against the claims of the Messiah.

If, however, we turn to the beginning of this very chapter of St. John, we shall find a narrative of how a great multitude from the cities and villages, having followed our Lord up the mountain to hear His teaching, were in danger of being starved from their own improvidence in not having taken bread with them; and how our Lord, having found one with five barley loaves and two small fishes, miraculously fed them, five thousand in number, with this scanty store—so that they were not only all satisfied, but twelve baskets were filled with the fragments that remained over! Here was bread from heaven! not sent through an intermediary, like Moses—but brought directly down by Him who was Himself the Bread of Life; so that those who saw this miracle that Jesus did, were fain to exclaim, 'This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.'

It is evident, therefore, that the mere feeding of the material body, even by a miracle, has no power to change the heart; and this gives our Saviour good cause to show what is the nature and the meaning of that true bread, the Bread of Life, which He came to bring; and which He was now willing and anxious to give to all such as would accept it at His hands.

Miracles, indeed, appealing as they do, for the most part, to the senses, ever fail to convince the heart. It is not always that they reach the understanding, even as in the case before us. For they were of no avail to convince the incredulous and undetermined; they had no power to bend the stubborn wills and inclinations of those who wished not to believe; and the miracles of Cana and Capernaum, no more than the feeding of the multitude, produced not the slightest effect upon their minds. Nevertheless many believed on Him, seeing the mighty works which He did; and, for the sake of these many, our Lord still performed some signs and wonders—such as we call miracles, because we are not able to take so wide a survey of their operation, as to embrace them in our narrow comprehension of the scheme of Divine order.

But to shut out miracles altogether from belief—not as a stiff-necked Jew, but as an educated and liberal-minded Christian,—is to reduce the Divine order to the calibre of human short-sighted perception—to narrow the infinite within the circle of the finite—to cut away the ground from spiritual belief—to undermine the very basis of Christian faith. It is to say, ‘This cannot be, because I cannot follow the stages by which it is alleged to be accomplished;’ or ‘This is impossible, because it is beyond *my* comprehension.’ It is to limit the powers of Jehovah, and to claim for human judgment the censorship of the Divine workings. It is to reduce spirit to the dead level of matter—to bring down Heaven to the material basis of Earth. And yet there are to be found men at this day, who feel themselves called upon to deny the Incarnation, because it savours of the miraculous; forgetting that the universe is a miracle—that all around them is beyond their power to explain—not to be imitated by art, and therefore miraculous; that they themselves are, and every man is, a standing miracle, confuting their narrow theories, and laughing to scorn all their petty cavillings and unworthy disbeliefs; each proclaiming aloud the superhuman, miraculous, and almighty power of God.

But the miracles of our Lord had other ends, beside that of converting the simple-minded, and establishing in the hearts of men an irresistible belief in His Divine mission. Each miracle, besides having a temporal aim of good to mankind, had also a spiritual intention, which might be applied as a lesson to the soul; each miracle was a material type of spiritual things; each a correspondence of something higher and more divine; by each miracle our Lord appeals, through bodily healing, to the healing of the soul—or by means of bodily nourishment to the nutrition of the soul. And more particularly was this the case with that miracle which commences this chapter of St. John. In this case our Lord had miraculously caused a multitude of five thousand persons to be amply fed by a modicum of bread, originally not more than sufficient for a dozen of them. Their bodily wants had been supplied, their cravings

of hunger appeased, by a means beyond their comprehension. Some of them perhaps called to mind the time when their fathers wandered famished in the desert, and there appeared upon the ground a 'small round thing, as small as the hoarfrost . . . like coriander seed, white ; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.' The Psalmist, referring to it in the 78th Psalm (ver. 24), says He 'had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven;' and in the 105th Psalm (ver. 40), it is expressed that 'He satisfied them with the bread of heaven.' This it is which is quoted in our text.

But if the manna of the wilderness was the bread of heaven, no less was that bread from heaven which our Lord produced from the small stock of five barley loaves, and which, like the widow's cruse of oil, failed not, until it had satisfied the whole multitude. The Jews, ever blind to anything of a spiritual nature, saw not the wonderful resemblance between the two miracles; they could not perceive the parallelism between the starving multitude in the desert, and the famishing crowd which had followed Jesus away from the towns and villages, up to a desert mountain ; yet were the one and the other, equally, types of one great truth or lesson, for which the time had now arrived that it should be fulfilled in its antitype.

Bread from heaven, to nourish failing bodies ! Bread from anywhere is good, when a man is fasting ; but bread from heaven would, in itself, be a superfluity—an inconsistency. From earth be the things of earth—from heaven the things of heaven. Starving man looks not for bread to fall from heaven—nor is there in the nature and order of things such heavenly bread to feed hungry bodies. If it has pleased God that on a special occasion He would send such bread, it was not that we should look to heaven for the staff of material life—but to point out that what bread is to the earthly and material body, such is the Divine Word to the spiritual soul : to shadow forth that He who could miraculously supply food for famishing and starving bodies, could also feed with heavenly Bread all such hungry souls who



would come to Him, and receive at His hands the Bread of eternal and spiritual Life.

For the soul, like the body, of which it is the inhabitant, needs strengthening and refreshing. If the body is deprived of its natural food, it languishes, and dies of inanition—so also if the soul is cut off from a due supply of heavenly nourishment, it, of necessity, dwarfs and shrinks, and would die; not, like the body, by a process of physical death, but by that second death, which we are assured is far worse; a living death—a death of which it is conscious, and from which yet it cannot recover—from which it can never be restored to life, unless by the intervention of Him who in Himself is the resurrection and the life.

But the Jews, natural-minded as they were, knew little of such spiritual bread. They claimed for Moses, their leader and patriarch, that he brought them that bread from heaven, which they called manna. For what could be that food which came, they knew not whence, and fell like the dew from heaven upon the earth, but heavenly bread? It was sweet to the taste, and it nourished them, and that sufficed. ‘Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat,’ as though Moses were the giver. But Christ corrects the error, saying, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven.’ Here is an expression which may bear two interpretations: 1st, ‘Moses did not give you that bread from heaven. It was God who sent it by the *hand* of Moses;’ or 2nd, ‘Moses gave you not that bread from *heaven*—that was not heavenly bread for the sustenance of your souls; that was mere earthly bread to nourish your bodies.’ ‘My Father giveth you the true Bread from heaven. For the Bread of God—the true Bread from heaven—is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.’

Thus He taught them that the true bread from heaven was of infinitely more importance than that which typified it in the Mosaic dispensation; that bread—God-sent, indeed—but

which was, after all, earthly, temporal, material—suited to the wants and requirements of their perishable bodies, and no more. This, in the representative worship of the Jewish Church of old, was all that He could then give. This He gave, in pledge, that, in the fulness of time, he would send them the true Bread from heaven, even Jesus Christ, God in the flesh—who said of Himself, 'I am that Bread of Life.'

It was a hard saying for that unbelieving age. Would it have been any easier now? Jesus, the Son of Mary of Nazareth, the brother of persons, in one sense obscure, and yet well known to those who dwelt in those parts; this man, who had grown up amongst them—now claimed to be *Bread*—and the Bread of Life—come down from heaven! We can make allowances for the want of faith and belief exhibited by the Jews. And yet to those who felt in their hearts the influence of Christ's teaching—the elevating power of the Sermon on the Mount—who saw the fulfilment, in Him, of the prophetic declarations concerning the Messiah, which had been so carefully held as the Jewish heritage—who had seen His mighty works—who had already perceived in their inmost souls the nourishment afforded to their faith—the edification in goodness and righteousness and true holiness, which accrued to them from spiritual intercourse with Him: to such, the declaration, 'I am the Bread of Life' must have come home with the irresistible power and overwhelming force of an irrefragable and an eternal Truth. 'The Bread of God is He that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.' As He said also of Himself, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; whoso believeth on Me shall have eternal life.' For as the bread of earth can restore life to the man who is dying of starvation—so can the heavenly Bread give eternal life to that immortal part of man, which alone can receive it—the soul. And without that Bread, the soul cannot have life, but must perish everlastingly.

No wonder that some who were touched in their hearts with the offer of so precious a gift—who desired to feed upon this

heavenly provision, exclaimed, 'Lord, evermore give us this bread.' For to be constantly supplied with that which shall ever nourish us with a sufficiency of goodness and truth—which shall ever keep our souls furnished with all the graces which should fit us for an eternal citizenship of heaven—what is that but the highest aspiration, the chiefest end of our existence? Ever more give us this Bread—in such quantities, and in such proportions as may be fitted to each soul's power of receiving and assimilating—as each has need, and as each has capacity. Let but the taste for it, and the appetite for it remain with us, and we shall not fail to have it satisfied. Our Lord has not forgotten our need of it—nor has He left us a chance or fear of our ceasing to ask for the necessary supplies, which we might otherwise have done, if left entirely to ourselves; but in His own prayer, which He taught to His disciples, and which we all use assiduously and frequently, we daily make our humble petition to Him, 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

## LECTURE XVII.

### ‘I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.’

‘Then spake Jesus again unto them saying, I am the light of the world : he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.’—JOHN viii. 12.

IF, as we have no reason to doubt, there were in the world, and in the society of that day, men as independent in their thoughts and ideas as there are at present ; if there were men, as free-thinking (as it is termed) as now—we need not wonder at the reception our Lord met with among them. We need not go any farther than this passage, to account for the envy, hatred, and malice and all uncharitableness which encountered Him, and which opposed themselves to teachings so novel, so strange, and so different from the commonly received opinions of the world at large. It is, indeed, a strong evidence of the Divine mission of our Lord, that, in spite of the greatest difficulties and drawbacks, His doctrine not only gained ground, without being immediately and speedily extinguished, but that during the course of nineteen centuries it has so leavened the world that all that is great and noble may be said to be its outcome and its offspring. For He came, originally, when mankind were least willing to receive Him, and most immersed in self-worship, and in all those beliefs and vices which were fast binding them hand and foot, and which rendered His coming an imperative necessity. It was no golden age of the world when He appeared amongst men ; it was a leaden age of dullness of spirit—a brazen age of overt iniquity and vice—an iron age of bondage of men’s souls to influences which had accumu-

lated for evil to such an extent that no man was free, nor could any liberate himself. It was an age of hollowness and of hopelessness—and men knew it not.

But when the common soul of humanity, as it were, is plunged into such depths as this, the misfortune is, that there is so little to work upon in the struggle for reformation. It is like striving to extract a drowning man from the rotten ice, which gives way under one's feet at every effort; it is like trying to pull a man out of a foul morass into which the feet slide helplessly with every exertion; and, spiritually considered, nothing but a superhuman influence—a Divine aid—could possibly be effective in making any way with the collective souls of a race so hopelessly entangled, so pitifully fallen.

For the very means necessary to extricate man from this abyss would only tend to plunge him more deeply in it, unless used with the utmost care and (if such an expression be allowed) tact. A man in whom self-love is developed to its utmost extent, requires that that self-love be not too rudely shaken, or it rises in arms against even the kindest endeavours to liberate him from it; and so, mankind, in the time of our Lord, was ready to rebel at any sign of an assumed or paraded superiority, and to exclaim, 'Who made thee a ruler and a judge?' And this feeling would have been universal among the Jews of that day, had it not been for the Divine wisdom and mercy which provided a precursor—a voice of one crying, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.' This was the more important as absolutely preceding the announcement of Christ Himself, inasmuch as there was no disturbing cause to influence men's minds against the coming teacher—whose advent, it was predetermined, should be in such a guise, and of such a character, as least fitted in with the preconceived ideas of men, who had long looked for the promised Messiah.

And yet, all that Divine wisdom could effect without interfering with 'free-will and liberty of thought and action, could not save the messenger from ignominy, nor the Messiah from

death. For although there were a few who would accept Him from the depths of their hearts, and according to the varying degrees of force of their intellect, they were but a small and feeble folk, willing to be illuminated, and not averse to receive that light which He declared Himself to be—while the great mass of mankind, believing that they were themselves sufficiently enlightened, turned with scorn from one who declared Himself to be the Light of the World—and never forgave Him for that which, in their miserable self-delusion, they regarded as an assumption of superiority such as their ingrained self-love would never permit them to brook.

The world had seen men who had been lights, and revered as such, before now; men who had shed a clear lustre over their age and race, and had impelled it forward with an irresistible impulse. These men were known and recognised; and even more, received a semi-worship from their different schools of followers, strengthening and increasing as time went on. But these men had taught nothing so widely different from the natural instincts and aspirations, as to excite the jealousy and antipathy of the people—unless, as in the case of Socrates, their principles were of so broad and abstract a character as to be taken for a subversion of the popular form of religion; in which case popular fury subjugated the audacious philosopher to obloquy, and even to death. But these men had not proclaimed themselves as divine lights—they had allowed their teachings to make their way, in the first instance, with the educated and the patrician classes, by their means and influence to leaven the world at large. How different was the system pursued by our Lord Himself. He did not address Himself to the wealthy and the noble—He did not come in the guise of a philosopher to captivate the aristocratic and gilded youth of a capital with learned disquisitions and elaborate sophisms; but He taught in simple parables, the plain and far-reaching principles of a recognised morality, in unison with the hidden instincts of the human soul; and these went straight home to those whom He addressed—who were men, not marred and

artificialized by contact with the splendour and temptations of the world, but unsophisticated, simple, and natural; and these men He moulded at His will—formed them as a nucleus of truth—marshalled them as bearers of the Gospel to the world at large—and acknowledged the justice of His Father, in that He had hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes.

But yet these precedent philosophers, who had appeared as shining lights from time to time, must not be considered as mere will-o'-the-wisps, misleading and misguiding. They themselves professed to be but inquirers. They themselves acknowledged that they were searchers after light and truth—and they had a higher conception of God, and the soul, and immortality, in proportion to their own humility, and the profound conviction of their own positive ignorance. But they were yet lights, and great lights, compared with the bulk of mankind and of teachers—lights which did not hide themselves under a bushel, but gave of their rays for the further illumination of mankind.

But all this shows the infinite superiority of Christ. The light which He came to bring was not the light of the stars, which differ from one another in glory: it was not the light of the moon, reflected from a superior luminary, and shedding but a still pale and ineffectual beam over the slumbering world; it was the light of the rising Sun, the day-spring from on high, the heavenly dawn, which was destined to shine more and more unto the perfect day. For the Sun of Righteousness had veritably risen with healing in His wings—the clouds of a long dark night had dissipated, and He had enunciated a great and everlasting truth when He declared, ‘I am the Light of the world!’

But the light does not come all at once, and our Lord, the source of light, was veiled in the flesh. We are apt to say that the light of dawn struggles with the darkness, and the metaphor is a correct one; the Light of the world had also to struggle with the darkness of error and self-love, and the struggle was deadly. True, there could be but one termination



to such a struggle, just as there could be but one termination to the struggle between the mists of darkness and the beams of the morning. But when light began to shine upon the world, men, accustomed to long darkness, had begun to love it, and were unwilling to recognise that light had arisen; they resisted it, they fought against it, never stopping to consider against what they were fighting; the progress of the dawn was kept back by the conflict of man, the mission of Christ was retarded by the strenuous resistance of those whom He came to benefit, and He was forced to exclaim, 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved *darkness* rather than light.'

It was obviously impossible for men in that age to understand precisely what our Lord meant when he said, 'I am the Light of the world.' They would naturally conceive that He had placed Himself upon a pinnacle of self-asserted superiority, which excited, in those who heard it without interest or intelligence, feelings only of anger and indignation. They would be apt to imagine that this was a mere arbitrary assumption, only deserving of scorn and contempt, that a carpenter's son, born in a poor and despised province of Judæa, should assume a title and an attitude far above what the greatest sages had ever ventured upon before. And yet, properly understood, it became the simplest and the grandest of facts. For God, who is love and wisdom, whose attributes are expressed in goodness and truth, had verily visited His people; and, in Divine Truth, had become the Son of Man, the Word made flesh. Truth, up to this time, had indeed been shed upon the world, and had struggled in the minds of men against the natural tendencies to falsity and errors; and however brightly it may have illuminated some rare and favoured men, it had now been reduced to a mere flickering and dying flame, which, if it expired, could only be re-kindled from its source. But that Source of Truth had appeared among them: to those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death light was sprung up; for Divine Truth is spiritual light, and He whose Word was truth

—He who could send the Spirit of Truth to guide men into all truth—He who was Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life—He was indeed the *Light of the world*.

It thus becomes evident that it was no mere figure of speech, no mere metaphorical abstraction, no mere rhetorical flourish, which our Lord made use of on this and similar occasions, but a plain and simple fact ; which, like many of His teachings, was ill understood by the most spiritual-minded at the time, but which to us becomes a vital and eternal truth. But it was a truth only known to Him who enunciated it—to none else could it be known ; it was a revelation, which was to be heard with bowed head, and in implicit faith : for the Light, which He was, had not yet overspread the world ; it was as yet only the dawn, the day-spring, in which men could see but dimly the forms of truth which they instinctively aspired after ; and the Sun of Righteousness Himself, although in their midst, had veiled His face in a mantle of flesh, lest a too sudden recognition should lead to a despal, a falsification, an open-eyed denial of that Truth itself, which He not merely symbolized, but absolutely embodied in Himself.

The Pharisees—blind guides—exclaimed, ‘Thou bearest record of Thyself ; Thy record is not true.’ They might as well have argued that the sun was not, because his beams were everywhere bearing witness of his own existence. Not comprehending that truth is truth, and should be valued and prized for its own sake, they sought for some testimony external to truth, to prove it was truth. They sought an impossibility. Truth bears its own impress, and needs not the fallible and adventitious corroboration of some lower standard, which may be truth or not. The very objection to which they gave utterance showed their incompetence to understand our Lord, on the one hand—and on the other, the profundity of His utterance. He did bear record of Himself, and justly, for this was a case beyond their experience and comprehension, a case which was unique ; and though uttered for the contemplation of the world eighteen centuries ago,

only in this age begins to be understood and dimly appreciated.

It may indeed be said in one sense that from the very beginning of things the Lord existed, as that Man whose form He only assumed in the latter days. Jehovah was, in His form and attributes, that which, on a finite scale, He granted to His creatures to be, when He first created them. Jehovah was ever the Source of Goodness and Truth, and His Word, which was coëval with man's existence, was the clothing of that Truth in a natural covering, suited to the uses of man in a material world. For man was created in the image and likeness of God—a receptacle, therefore, of a finite portion of the love and wisdom of his Creator, a form fitted for the development of goodness and truth. And man only fulfils the great object of his creation when he fulfils those uses for which he was placed in the world. As long as mankind remained in their primal condition of innocence, so long they were in free and full reception of Truth from that Source whence receptacle and spiritual inflow alike emanated ; but when man fell from that high estate, he lost the power of reception—he deprived God of the means He had hitherto provided for coming near to man—he ceased to be a receptacle of Divine attributes ; and thence became as one dead. His natural mind was incapable of perceiving the light of Truth, and his internal or spiritual mind had become closed against it. Only by the Lord taking his nature, only by the Son of Man becoming manifest in the flesh, could the light of Divine Truth ever reach him again. And thus became necessary the Incarnation of our blessed Lord, and thus, also, as by the fall (by Adam's transgression, as it is termed), the human race became as dead ; so by Christ, or by the incarnation of Divine Truth, he was once more restored to life.

Thus it appears that darkness, the companion of death, was over the whole earth when Christ came ; according to the prophecy of Isaiah, 'Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.' But as the Apostle says to the Ephesians

(v. 14), 'All things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' And thus has He come to be the Light of the world, to illumine its dark places, to be a lamp unto our feet, and a light to our path—to enlighten the ignorant, to open the eyes of the blind, and to shed a clear lustre, a heavenly radiance, upon the way which leads to eternal life.

Never before had light come so immediately upon the human soul; hitherto it had passed through some other medium before reaching us; before the Incarnation it was not possible that it should be directly received. But now the Light shineth, never more to be dimmed or extinguished. John was called a burning and a shining light; but he was not a light in this sense, he was but a conveyer of illumination—a *lamp*, as it is in the original—but Christ is *Light itself*. John came only to bear witness to that Light; for 'that was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'

We have our Lord's testimony that there are some who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. But were it not so, we might well ask, Who would not welcome the light, and walk by it? We have the assurance of our reason that Christ is our Light, and he further teaches us that 'he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life.' To walk in darkness is to refuse the light, to choose the evil and to refuse the good; and none can do this without a renunciation of truth; for to have once known the truth, however dimly, is to have had light, with its responsibilities and capabilities. To continue in evil-doing, is to choose the darkness of death; but to follow Christ is to have the Light of Life. And Light is a gift not to be despised, though a gift which the wicked undervalue, and therefore lose; for 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.' And if we, in this life, seek this gift at its source and spring, we shall inherit the promise made through Isaiah the prophet, when the material light fades upon the

sense, leaving the soul illuminated by the heavenly beams of Divine Truth which we have made ours, by loving it, and appropriating it. 'The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down ; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself : for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended ' (Isa. lx. 19, 20).

## LECTURE XVIII.

‘BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM.’

‘Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.’—JOHN viii. 57, 58.

FEW statements of our Lord concerning Himself could have been more puzzling to the sceptical and practical Jewish mind than this one. And we can scarcely wonder that they should have been startled by a claim which it was utterly out of their power to comprehend. If the Jews had one subject of pride more than another, it was the pride of descent from the great father of the Hebrew race. For not only was Abraham a great and powerful prince of antiquity, but he was, traditionally, one of the most highly favoured of men. He was the friend of God—he was one with whom God had condescended to speak face to face—he was a man celebrated through the ages, as the pattern of faith, the prime exemplar and personification of holy obedience. To be descended from such an ancestor was in itself a great subject of congratulation; it was an origin which was highly valued by all who could distinguish between idolatry and the worship of the true God—an ancestry appreciated the more, in proportion to the knowledge possessed of the history of the race, handed down through thousands of years of generations. The more learned of the Scribes and Pharisees, who were well acquainted with the early dealings of Jehovah with the patriarchs, could not fail to venerate the name of Abraham above every name which had shed a lustre upon mankind—

above every founder of a kingdom or a race, which had ever shone conspicuous in the annals of traditionary lore.

But besides all this, the promises which had been made by Jehovah to this same Abraham were of so wonderful and comprehensive a nature, that it is by no means extraordinary that the Jews should have prided themselves on their descent from this highly favoured ancestor. For every Jew felt himself to be a partaker of those promises. To him, and to his seed, were the promises made; and his seed claimed for themselves, or for their posterity, a due share in those blessings which had, for two thousand years, been brooding, as it were, over his descendants, and were not yet fulfilled. That they would be fulfilled, every Jew firmly believed; and everyone hoped the fulfilment might arrive in their own time. To be a child of Abraham, therefore, was to have a claim to a great inheritance—a claim not yet satisfied; to have Abraham to their father, was to be members of a family which, in antiquity, in rank, in importance, in prospective prosperity, should excel every other family of nations which the world knew. Therefore, in their blindness of heart, the Jews thought to cover a multitude of sins, when they proudly, but vainly urged, 'We have Abraham to our Father.'

This plea had, however, already been combated by John the Baptist—who foresaw the errors to which it would lead those to whom the Messiah was just about to show Himself. He, we know, preached repentance. It was a real feeling of guilt, and a real wish for amendment, which was necessary for the world to possess, before it could become fit for the reception of the benefits which the Lord would bring. The Jewish world required awakening out of that apathy which had been gathering around them for centuries—they required to be disabused of certain notions which clung tenaciously to them, and of which the belief that because they had Abraham to their father, therefore they were exempt from certain responsibilities to which others, not so favoured, were liable, was a very important one. Therefore did John impress upon them the



necessity of a more important and searching test than this mere accidental descent from the Father of the Faithful; the test, namely, of a repentance which should bring forth fruits. It was not enough to be a child of Abraham; the promises were made, it is true, to Abraham and his seed—but with the promises were certain conditions which must be fulfilled. ‘For I know him,’ said Jehovah, ‘that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him’ (Gen. xviii. 19). This was the condition of the fulfilment of the promises which the Jews expected. But did they heed the conditions? did they act in the manner implied by this passage of Genesis? If they had done so, where would have been the need of a Redeemer? The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost; and the Jewish nation was lost at the time of the coming of the Messiah. They had not kept in the way of the Lord—they had not done justice and judgment—they were in need of repentance bringing forth fruit; and therefore, to say ‘We have Abraham to our father,’ was to lean upon a reed, which would afford no support before Him who was like a refiner’s fire, who should purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver. And to show the utter hollowness of their claim to impunity as sons of Abraham, the Baptist adds, ‘For I say unto you that God is able of these *stones* to raise up children unto Abraham.’

It might be supposed that such a denunciation of a false and delusive hope would have been of some effect in disenchanting the Jews of their favourite belief that, as descendants of Abraham, they were especially relieved from the necessity of doing such acts, or conducting themselves in such a manner, as was incumbent on other people. But the idea was strong in them, ‘I am holier than thou;’ or, as the Pharisee expressed it in the parable, ‘Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are;’ and the teaching of John the Baptist, which was doubtless not without its due result in preparing a remnant of the people for

the hearing of the Word, and for the germination of the good seed—was yet, nevertheless, of but very partial effect. There were some humble-minded men whose souls were prepared for the ministry of Christ—who were the chosen depositaries of the mysteries of the kingdom; but the proud and self-confident Pharisees were not so easily to be won from their old paths. In them was powerfully developed this notion of inheritance from Abraham, of not only material, but also spiritual benefits, from the mere fact of sonship. They had yet to learn that Christ’s kingdom was a spiritual one, which demanded something personal in themselves, which could not be afforded by the mere fact of their Israelitish descent. And from them the words of the Baptist glanced harmlessly, not scaring their slumbering consciences, nor alarming their well-cased spirits; but they amply justified the Baptist’s expression of surprise, who, when he saw them among the crowds at the river’s brink, exclaimed, ‘O generation of vipers, who hath warned *you* to flee from the wrath to come?’

It is therefore perhaps not astonishing that this rooted belief of the Pharisees found expression early in our Lord’s career of ministration. ‘Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’ This was the stone of offence—the exciting cause which brought out the Jewish fallacy. They answered Him, ‘We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?’ (vers. 32, 33). Our Saviour had just declared Himself to be the Light of the world, and thereby He had raised the ire of the Pharisees, who had endeavoured to cast discredit upon His testimony: and this had led Him to declare Himself as sent by One in whom dwelt *truth*—that truth which He brought from the Father, whose representative He was, and whose will He strictly performed. He was Son of Man, as to Divine Truth, and hence He declared that on the one hand the Truth should make them free; and further, that whether descended from Abraham or not—whether they had been in bondage or not—if the *Son* shall make them free, they should be *free*

*indeed.* He did not wish to deny their kinship to Abraham, but to show them that they must not depend upon that for everything, as they were prone to do; for that although as to the flesh they were descendants of Abraham, yet spiritually they were children of the devil. For, as St. Paul taught, in a manner which must have brought it home to their consciences, ‘Verily, circumcision profiteth, *if thou keep the law*; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.’ ‘For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly . . but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly . . whose praise is not of men, but of God’ (Rom. ii.).

To the reiterated boast that Abraham was their father, then, our Lord opposes their rejection of Himself. ‘If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.’ For we are told that ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness’ (Gal. iii. 6)—but the Jews were, in this important respect, anything but children of Abraham. The Apostle justly says, that ‘they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham’ (ver. 7); but the Jews of Christ’s day had no faith. They had lost all belief in everything, but their own worthiness; they dishonoured God; they believed not the Son of Man, who was Divine Truth itself; and thus they had forfeited all claim to the promises made to them by virtue of their descent from Abraham. ‘I know that ye are Abraham’s seed,’ our blessed Lord said to them; and just after He added, ‘*If ye were* Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham’—thus clearly showing the line of demarcation between the letter and the spirit—between the unworthy descendants of Abraham’s body, and the worthy recommendation of those who walked in the steps and faith of Abraham.

But although they could not gainsay the argument of our Lord, who clearly showed them the invalidity of their claim to the promises of Abraham, this only served to incense the Pharisees against Him who had so mercilessly turned the tables of logic against them: and they were ready to seize upon any point which would give a colourable pretext for persecution;

nor had they long to wait. In pursuance of His argument, our Saviour urged that they would not hear the words of God—because they were not of God ; and finally made that great announcement which is the concentration of Christian doctrine : ‘ Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death.’

It is singular how impenetrable was the coat of naturalism which covered the Jews at this time. Whenever our blessed Lord made any statement, even to His disciples, which had a spiritual meaning, He was at once misunderstood. In scarcely any case were the spiritual lessons of the Gospel received, unless they appealed strongly to the natural man. Nicodemus could not understand—the Pharisees could not understand—the disciples even could not understand. Spiritual lessons ran through their ears, making no impression upon their minds ; hearing they heard, and did not understand—and seeing they saw, but did not perceive. Whenever death was spoken of, it only conveyed to them the idea of physical death ; just as when the serpent said, ‘ Ye shall not surely die,’ the words implied that the death meant, was the death only of the body. Did the Pharisees know of anyone who in process of time had escaped seeing death ? The transparency of the deceit, which they would imply in the utterance of our Lord, does not seem to have occurred to them ; but they simply accepted the actual statement in the crassness of their understanding, literally and naturally : and were greatly offended. ‘ Who was this, to claim a power over death ? whose very word was implied to be a spell against the common lot of all ? Was not this the Carpenter’s Son ? Do we not know His father and His mother ? Are not His brothers and sisters with us ? and this man arrogates an elixir, of which not even Abraham or the prophets had any knowledge—an elixir which He pretends shall preserve all who use it from death ! Abraham is dead—the prophets are dead. Art Thou then greater than our father Abraham, which is dead ? Whom makest Thou Thyself ? We may imagine the excited questioning and upbraiding which

followed this declaration : but it only led to the climax. 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day ; and he saw it, and was glad.' Not alone Abraham indeed—but, as our Saviour said in another place, 'For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them ; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them' (Luke x. 24). These, indeed, we are told by St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon earth' (xi. 13). To Abraham, indeed, as the father of the Israelitish dispensation, God had declared Himself, and appeared, and conversed with him, as a man converseth with his friend—saying, 'I am the Almighty God ; walk before Me and be thou perfect.' On many occasions had God vouchsafed communication with the patriarchs of old, but to no other in those ages was God so well known—the God of the Old Testament, the Jehovah, the Lord the God of Heaven, and the God of the Earth—the everlasting God. It was as such that he knew Him ; but with eyes of faith he could also see the God of the new covenant, who was hereafter to come, that Christ, of which he was himself a type, who was to lay down His life, even as he himself laid down at God's command the life which God had given him—the life of his son Isaac.

But all this was incomprehensible to the Pharisees and Jews. What could the Nazarene have in common with the old patriarchal founder of their race? 'Thou art not fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?' The boldness of our Lord's assertion must carry with it truth, or an alternative of such shallow assumption, as, even in the mind of one who only saw our Lord's doings, and heard His words of wisdom, would have been utterly unworthy of His reputation and incompatible with His character. We, in our day, can more clearly estimate that character, and see how divine and superhuman it was ; and we need not be assured that He could neither lie, nor mislead.

Yet nothing could be more clear than His reply to the challenge—'Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, *I am*.' And in this reply, not only was a verbal assent given to the express question of the Jews—but in that assent was included an implication of a most solemn and conclusive character—a divine allusion (if it may be so called) which no mere man could have dared to utter. For here our Saviour used the very words of Jehovah—here He assumed the very name by which He chose to be called. For when Moses saw the glory of the Lord in a bush on Horeb, he inquired, 'When they shall say unto me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you' (Ex. iii. 13, 14).

This is indeed He who is alike the God, and the Redeemer of the Old and of the New Testament. Thus did He declare Himself, while in the flesh, as identical with the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Thus did He vindicate His honour, and the honour of the Father who sent Him; and claim what the seer of Patmos was taught of Him in the spirit—who heard a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty' (Rev. i. 8). Thus, indeed, are we taught that He who took our nature upon Him, and became flesh, had stepped down from His glory, and was yet to be glorified by the Father, with the glory which He had with Him before the world was. 'Before Abraham was, I am'—not fifty years old, indeed, as to the earthly body inherited from His mother Mary—but as to the Divine soul within—as to the Divine which awaits its complete union with the human—the Father, which is to be glorified with the Son—

'JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER !'



## LECTURE XIX.

### THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

‘A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way : and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was : and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him ; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves ? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.’—LUKE x. 30-37.

‘AND who *is* my neighbour ?’ This is a question which at first sight seems very easy of answer, although the lesson or moral to be deduced from that answer is by no means always a just one. Neighbourhood is too often regarded as an excuse for feelings and for conduct the very reverse of that which our Lord teaches in the beautiful parable of the Good Samaritan ; and indeed we may safely say, that, although some enlightened men in all ages had views of such things, views of truth (that is), far superior to the generality of mankind, and could form a correct estimate, not only of what constituted neighbourship, but also of what duties and responsibilities such neighbourship entailed—nevertheless, our Lord’s story of the wounded man and his helper must have come with surprise and astonishment to many of his hearers, who had been brought up in very different views.



For men in the early ages of the world had little notion of neighbourship, except that one must beware of one's neighbours, and be jealous of too close a vicinage. And they conceived, as many do in this day, that neighbours, whether that term be applied to a people or to individuals, simply meant that they were in close proximity, and dwelt so near that for that very reason they were to be held at arm's length. What has ever been the fate of two nations divided from one another by a simple geographical boundary? They are neighbours—that is, they abut one on the other; but has that ever been considered a reason why they should treat one another with respect and amity? Is their natural proximity regarded as the seal of friendship, confidence, and mutual interest? Not so, but more generally that very fact has been the ground of endless jealousies, and of perpetual mistrust. The one sees in the unavoidable nearness of the other only a strong reason for caution and suspicion, an eternal occasion for watchfulness and wariness, lest the other should take an undue advantage of its proximity to sow the seeds of disaffection, to gain a vantage-point in its dominion, or absolutely to annex its territory; and the neighbouring states are in a continual condition of bickering, enmity, and warfare. And yet they are neighbours, in the common sense of the term, although their neighbourhood does not inspire them with either international courtesy, or with common human philanthropy.

If, again, in either of these countries we take two adjacent cities or towns, shall we find that their neighbourhood acts in a more benevolent manner? does their mutual proximity inspire either of them with mutual respect, or with mutual affection? Are there not perpetual envies and jealousies between them? Does one rejoice in the prosperity of another, or glory in the success of its neighbour? We are forced to reply in the negative. Nor is the case better between two adjacent houses. If the lands of the one abut upon those of the other, are they not the subject of continual heart-burning, not unfrequently leading to open war, declared perhaps by their ancestors, and left as a

legacy from generation to generation? Claims of right set up by one against another, questions of dignity and precedence which keep up a continual irritation—these are too often the fruits of neighbourhood in such cases. And if we further descend to private families, living always in one another's sight, is one's next-door neighbour always willing to live in amity and benevolence? Do men, who are habitually separated in their walk through life only by a garden wall, exhibit the Christian graces more brightly than others? or does not that close vicinity rather tend to emulation, to strife, to wrangling? If men indeed lived neighbourly with their neighbours only, then would the world be more Christian than it is. For if men could carry out the second great commandment with those among whom they were most closely associated, they would find little difficulty in exhibiting their benevolence and regard for their fellow-men at a greater distance; and when individuals, and families, and nations, can learn to carry out the great example of Christ, and live at peace with those nearest to them, then will the world become sanctified, and heaven will have been brought down to earth.

‘But who, then, is my neighbour?’ The question remains yet unanswered. For the word ‘neighbour’ has two widely different meanings, and the unregenerated man only knows of one. Our neighbour lives next door, or opposite, or in the same street; we see him daily, he is sufficiently near to make himself disagreeable, if he have a mind to do so, or, on the other hand, to make himself beloved, if that is his disposition; and we hold ourselves neutral, until he shall have declared himself one way or the other. In a wider sense, our neighbours are those of the country nearest to us, against whom we must always be upon our guard. We must watch for the first signs of over-reaching on their part; if they are friendly, we may perhaps make an alliance with them; if otherwise, we must go to war with them; but in each case we must carefully consult our own interest, and whether for peace or for war, we must take care that we get the best of the bargain.

This is the common idea of *neighbourhood*. And this is neighbourhood as it exists in our fallen and imperfect condition. This is neighbourhood, as it was understood by the Jews ; this is the kind of neighbourhood which our Lord came to condemn, and to which the parable of the Good Samaritan was intended to be an antidote. For the neighbourhood which existed under the old dispensation, not indeed by virtue of the old law, but by perversion of it, our Lord substituted the neighbourhood of the new dispensation, which should rather be called the *neighbourship* of the Gospel. For herein lies the difference, that neighbourship, such as our Lord taught, was independent of vicinity ; and while it necessarily included neighbours in the literal sense, its real meaning was far more extended, far more embracing, far more comprehensive, even as that which is spiritual is far more embracing and comprehensive than that which is natural.

‘A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves.’ The thieves treated him truly in a neighbourly way, that is according to the natural ideas of neighbourhood, for they transferred to themselves those goods of which he was possessed, and appropriated everything that would be of service to themselves. Self, the source of all evil, was their only spring of action. Probably, if he had been a fully consenting party to this transfer, they would not have wounded him, and left him half dead ; but self stops at no half measures in the pursuit of its object, and the thieves ministered to their own self-interest, regardless of all other considerations. As the unfortunate man thus lay stripped and wounded, ‘by chance there came down a certain priest that way.’ The first person who is represented as having seen the wayfarer, wounded and insensible, was a priest—one of the class to which were entrusted the spiritual keeping and guidance of the Jews ; one who, by virtue of his office of intermediary between God and man, was bound to perform certain well-marked functions of a high and spiritual character between Jehovah and his fellow-men. But did his sacred and spiritual character necessitate

his interference in a purely secular case like this? He did not look upon it in that light; he did not imagine that as a physician of souls he was in any way bound to care for the bodies of his flock. As long as he performed his perfunctory duties of priest, why should he put himself to inconvenience by taking upon himself the care of a wounded man? He had no charity, although a priest; he had no humanity, although he stood in the place of God. Who was this man who lay insensible by the roadside? He did not know him, he was not even one of his congregation; he was no neighbour of his, and so he passed by on the other side.

Not long after, a Levite came to the same place. A Levite held an inferior office to that of a priest. In Numbers iii. we read that a Levite was one whose duty it was to minister to the priest; they were given to the priests for service in the tabernacle. They were thus an inferior caste, as it were, less holy than the priest; but as if to show that it was the fulfilment of the spirit rather than of the letter of the law which availed most, the Levite is represented as being a shade superior to the priest. While the latter passed by on the other side, without a spark of sympathy, the Levite came and looked on the wounded man, although his humanity was not sufficient to move him to active compassion.

This, indeed, was reserved for the third passer-by. A very different man was he from those who preceded him. He was neither a priest nor a Levite—nor was he even a Jew. He was a Samaritan—one of a despised and hated heretical sect, of whom in another place it was said, ‘The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans’ (John iv. 9). Yet notwithstanding this, when the Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where the wounded man lay, and saw him, *he* had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds. He did not stop to consider whether he was a Samaritan like himself; he did not wait to ask himself if he knew him, or whether he was a neighbour; he only saw that the man was in distress—that he was in urgent need of help and assistance; he only recognised that he was a

fellow-man—and his humane soul overflowed with compassion—his merciful heart melted within him—his noble nature vindicated itself—and the full force of the precept made itself felt within him, ‘Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you.’

The Samaritan was indeed not the neighbour to him whom he succoured, in the commonly received sense of the word. The priest and the Levite were much more nearly his neighbours—and yet they did not consider him a neighbour sufficiently near to make it incumbent upon them to help him. But in the case of the Samaritan, by no stretch of meaning could he be considered a neighbour in the sense of *neighbourhood*—and yet he had mercy on him. For the Samaritan had a much higher and more comprehensive appreciation of the term *neighbour*, applying it not to *neighbourhood*, but to *neighbourship*—a term which in his mind embraced not only those who happened to live near him—to be of his blood—or even of his nation, and way of thinking—but included all formed, like himself, in the image and likeness of his Maker. He carried out the idea, not in the letter only, but in the spirit; and he saw in the wounded man, not an alien, in whom he had no interest—not a being of another mould, about whom he had no concern—but another *self*, his neighbour, whom it was both his duty and his pleasure to assist and succour. The priest and the Levite each asked themselves the question put by Cain of old, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ The Samaritan was infused by what has been called the Enthusiasm of Humanity—seeing in all men, of whatever creed or nation, simply fellow-sharers with himself of the humanity which came from God; and he remembered what was written in the Proverbs of Solomon (xiv. 31), ‘He that honoureth his Maker hath mercy on the poor;’ and what the man of God declared unto Eli (1 Sam. ii. 30), ‘Them that honour Me, I will honour, saith the Lord.’

The law of the neighbour, although it has been felt in the hearts of many who have perhaps enjoyed few advantages of ethical teaching in ancient times, was never fully enunciated

until our Lord Himself, in the Sermon on the Mount, explained it to the multitude. The law of retaliation was well enough known. That law appealed too nearly to the old Adam to escape appreciation. 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil' (Matt. v. 38). 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.' It is true that in Leviticus xix. 18 we read once, and the only time, 'Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'—but it is not everyone who, like the lawyers, remembered this; and if they did remember it, it was always open to a casuistical qualification.

The lawyer, when asked by our Lord how he read the law, replied, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.' And our Saviour replied, 'Thou hast answered right. This do, and thou shalt live.' But the lawyer, 'willing to justify himself,' we are told, asked, 'And who is my neighbour?' It is one thing to say off a commandment glibly and by rote—another to apply it duly and correctly. The lawyer evidently felt himself driven into a corner. He could not deny that he knew the law—but when compelled to repeat it, he professed ignorance of its application; and willing to justify himself, demanded to know what neighbour really meant. Our Lord brought it home to him, as the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' brings it home to every one of us, that we are all neighbours—that neighbourship does not demand mere neighbourhood for the fulfilment of its duties to our fellow-men, but that *all* men are neighbours one to the other; and that it is the duty of everyone to exercise towards his fellows those virtues of charity, lovingkindness, benevolence, and mercy, which the



heathen and the half-heathen Jews imagined to be due only to those who were kinsmen by blood, or bound to one another by ties of gratitude and friendship. 'For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?' (Matt. v. 46). But 'Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.' And this indeed is the corollary our Lord draws from His exhortations upon mutual love and charity in the Sermon on the Mount, when He says, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

There is a worldly-wise proverb which says that 'Charity begins at home.' There is doubtless truth in this—but not the whole truth, and therefore it is misleading; and if trusted to entirely, is fatal. A man's first duty is doubtless to those about him, and immediately dependent upon him; and he would be wanting in kindness and prudence, did he pass them by, and exercise what he would call charity upon others, at the expense of those who had the greatest claims upon his bounty. But, on the other hand, those at home are often but another word for one's self; and if this proverb were taken as it stands, a lavish and selfish expenditure of affection and charity on them would greatly tend to circumscribe those feelings which were intended for the benefit of all one's fellow-creatures, and were never meant to be concentrated upon a small selfish circle. It is the enthusiasm, not of one's own blood (which is self), but the enthusiasm of humanity in general, which we are called upon to encourage—an enthusiasm which all possess, but which many try to stifle; whereas it is this enthusiasm which our Lord possessed in the highest degree, and which we, if we, as we profess to do, are to take Him as our example, should try hard to imitate.

Hence our neighbour, and our duties toward our neighbour, become more important in proportion to the extent and influence of what may be justly included in the term. Our country is our neighbour, and our duties to it exceed in im-



portance any individual relations; so also our Church is our neighbour, in a more transcendent sense; and in all cases our duty towards our neighbour, whether individual or collective, can only be truly performed when performed solely for the sake of the goodness and truth in which they consist.

‘All these commandments,’ said the rich young man, ‘have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?’ The answer was, ‘Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor.’

‘And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this,’ says the Apostle (Rom. xiii. 9), ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ And there is a double reason for this; first, by removing the exercise of love and charity out of a man’s own sphere, he thus provides an antidote for the love of self, which is really the root of all evil—the serpent that creeps into every man’s heart with the intent to drive him out of the promised Paradise; and secondly, to divert that which is the love of self into its proper channel, viz., the love of others, and the exercise towards them of that benevolence, mercy, and charity, which at once benefits them and ennoble the soul which performs it. For as the great poet has truly said,

‘It is twice blest;  
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.’

But the ground upon which we are called upon thus to act in a manner which does not commend itself to our natural minds, is given by our Lord also in His Sermon on the Mount, ‘That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and on the unjust.’ What we have to remember is that we are not merely brothers by blood to those of our immediate family circle, but that ‘He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth’ (Acts xvii. 26). All men therefore are brethren, and he is the wisest man who recognises the fact, and remembers that his neighbour, equally with himself, is the work of God—and not only the work, but also the care of

God ; and who is he that shall say, 'I am more important, or better than another man,' when that other man is equally under God's protection, and for what we know, may be far more deserving of it than ourselves? Christ died for all alike, and that fact alone ennobles all men, of whatsoever rank and station they may be ; and it is the duty of all men to remember this, and to afford to everyone that charity which they themselves need from others.

No man can stand alone in the world, no man is independent of the good will and good offices of others ; but how can he look for such good will, and such good offices, if he refuse them to his fellow-men? How can he 'hope for mercy, rendering none'? But whoso hath this world's good (not of money only), and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' (1 John iii. 17.) It cannot so dwell ; and such as would habitually act thus, such as habitually disregard the Law of the Neighbour, who act as did the priest and the Levite in the parable, such men will infallibly shut themselves out from the promise of our Lord made on the Mount of the Beatitudes. 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.'

## LECTURE XX.

### THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

‘After that He said unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth ; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death : but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.’—JOHN xi. 11-14.

IN this chapter we have a priceless record of the human and sympathetic side of our Lord’s nature, given by the beloved disciple, and by him alone. How much would have been lost to us, if this beautiful narrative had not been handed down, full, as it is, of touching incidents, and of a sustained interest which gives it a place apart, among all the chapters of the four Gospels. And not only so, but as we shall remark in the sequel, the lessons conveyed in it are of the weightiest importance, among the highest as applied to mankind generally, and at the same time, of the vastest personal import to every individual in particular.

It is an episode in the domestic history of a family, consisting of a brother and two sisters, who were all deeply attached to one another, but who also gained the enviable distinction of being the friends of our Lord, and dearly loved and valued friends also. Their mutual bond of affection is beautifully expressed in the terse language of the sacred writings, and is specially indicated by the anxiety of the sisters for their brother, who was sick : and we may be sure that he whom Jesus loved was a good and worthy man. ‘He whom Thou lovest is sick,’ was the message sent by the sisters ; who, in their anxious distress, at once flew for consolation and assist-

ance to the Lord, on whose sympathy they could well rely, and whose power to help they could fully trust. For Jesus (we are told) 'loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.' But although He who knows the thoughts of the heart, must have known, although absent, of the sickness of His friend, He nevertheless sent no direct message in reply to their appeal; nor had they indeed addressed to Him any direct petition, but they had made their needs known to Him, leaving Him to meet them in the way which He thought best; and He gave an assurance of ultimate triumph over death, although with an intimation that that triumph must be effected in God's own way, in a way which would not only redound to the glory of God, but would also serve as an occasion for the advancement of Christ's great work on earth.

Jesus, therefore, when He had heard that Lazarus was sick, came not instantly to his relief, but abode *two days* in the same place where he was. The faith which had impelled the sisters to send instantly to Jesus when their brother fell sick, was the faith of Thomas, the faith of sight: would they be able to brook the delay, the apparent neglect, the suspense of two critical days, and still retain the faith of things unseen? This was their appointed trial. It seemed unkind, this apparent passiveness; it seemed inconsistent with the love He bore them, that He should not instantly fly to their aid. And yet it is not without significance that between the two verses (the 4th and the 6th) occurs that simple, unvarnished, and blessed statement, 'Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.'

But perhaps they had yet to learn, that 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth' (Heb. xii. 6). It was, however, a grievous temptation; doubt, distress, and darkness overshadowed them during those two sad days; their love and trust in Jesus were sorely tried; and when their brother at last closed his eyes in death, without being comforted by the presence even of his Friend, the depth of their despair must have been indeed reached; nor could they, in the blackness of their sorrowful night, and

with eyes blinded with weeping, read aright the cheering and blessed promise, 'They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy' (Psa. cxxvi. 5).

But they had not entirely lost their faith. Martha, at all events, although misunderstanding the silence of Jesus, and wondering why so simple a thing should not have happened, as that He, who had healed the nobleman's son with a word, even without going to him, should not also have sent back a healing message, when they had first informed Him of His friend's sickness—she still retained the belief that Jesus could help them. 'I know' (she said to Him) 'that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.' She had but a vague idea of what she expected or hoped, just as she had, at this time, but a vague idea of the greatness and majesty of the Being whom she was addressing; but she evidently believed Him to be One in high favour with God; and to whom God would grant more than human power, should He ask it of Him. But although she had met Him with an implied reproach for His absence, she yet preserved her faith in His power, and to a great extent also in His willingness to do them good.

But where was Mary all this time? Martha, who represents the natural or external affection of truth, receives the first notice of the coming of Jesus, and runs to meet Him; but Mary, the spiritual and more interior affection, sat still in the house, the interior affection remaining for a time unconscious and inactive in the will. Mary, the loving one, overwhelmed with sorrow, weeping secretly, yet waiting hopefully, for the consolation of Christ's presence, sat in the house; until Martha, strengthened in her faith by the solemn adjurations of Jesus, goes secretly to her and informs her of His arrival. For Jesus had said to Martha, 'I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord! I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.'

Fortified, comforted, and encouraged by this solemn adjuration, and her consequent confession of faith, she seeks Mary, the sorrowing, saying, 'The Master is come, and calleth for thee.' Then Mary rose up quickly—sorrow, love, joy, all struggling within her breast—she hastens to meet her beloved Master; and when she saw Him, she fell down in adoration at His feet, her whole nature rent with conflicting emotions, which found vent in a great passionate cry of mingled lamentation and faith, 'Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died !'

The miracles performed by our Lord, during his ministry on earth, although so numerous, and of so various a character, were not merely exhibitions of a boundless and arbitrary power, but were all performed in accordance with Divine order; and therefore all bore important meanings, and especial significations. If we carefully examine any one of them, we shall find it conveys a spiritual lesson, more or less complete—a lesson which we shall do well to endeavour to unveil, and use (as was intended) for our own spiritual benefit. Like the parables, they teach, by correspondences and analogies, transcendent truths, more or less deeply hidden from superficial view, but which only demand reflection and study, to yield rich fruits of wisdom, of the highest kind. The miracles were, in fact, in many cases, *acted parables*; by which the double result was obtained, of giving relief to suffering humanity in this world, and imparting knowledge of spiritual things to those who were willing to search for them, and ready to receive them, when found.

None of the miracles were of a character injurious to humanity—none, like those of the succeeding Apostles, were of a destructive nature; all, with perhaps the single exception of the barren fig-tree, were of a conservative character; all were miracles of mercy, indicative of the power and the will of the Saviour of sinners—who came to seek and to save that which was lost—to do to the utmost that which He had promised, and for which He was come into the world; viz., for the healing of the sick—the restoration of the lame—the giving of



sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf—the cleansing of the utterly defiled leper—or, last and greatest triumph of all, the raising of the dead. . . . Of this last great miracle, the examples recorded are not numerous. Christ did not come into the world to conquer the death of the natural body. Had he done so, He would not have been our friend; *that* death is a salutary and orderly law of nature; and He came to fulfil the law at all points, both natural and spiritual. He was Divine Order itself, and therefore could not be come to disturb Divine Order: of which the natural death, and the consequent release of the imprisoned soul, is one of the most obvious, and most gracious of institutions. He was the Physician of souls; and therefore all His natural operations, as well as all His spiritual teachings, had reference to the life after death, and to the salvation of the immortal soul. His acts, therefore, of raising from the dead, were few in number. The widow's son—the ruler's daughter; these were sufficient to point great morals—to illustrate the great spiritual truths connected with life and death; and these great truths are more fully, and most unmistakably elucidated and summed up, as it were, in the beautiful narrative providentially recorded by St. John; and which is more particularly the subject of these remarks.

It is therefore beyond a doubt that, in raising from the dead, our Saviour purposed to set forth the great and sublime truth of the victory over *spiritual* death. It was this victory which He had come into the world to achieve—and without which conquest all the world must have succumbed to the dominion of sin, which necessarily involved spiritual death. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die,' saith the Prophet Ezekiel (xviii. 4); and the spirit of this condemnation is echoed throughout the Divine Word. 'The wages of sin is death' (Rom. vi. 23): Old and New Testament alike confirming the Law in this respect. There is no escape from what is an inherent law of our spiritual nature—that sin is spiritual death; and it is only the lying subtlety of the old serpent which whispers, 'Ye shall not surely die.'



The Divine Word consists *entirely* of exhortations to repentance, rational appeals for reformation, and lessons, illustrations, and experiences in regeneration. By far the greater part of the Word is devoted to this last subject—the subject of the most vital importance to the human race. It is Regeneration—of which repentance and reformation are but the necessary preliminaries and preludes, and first initiatory stages, as it were—which is the proper work of the life of every man. Since all have sinned, it is necessary that every man (and each for himself) must retrace the steps by which he has fallen from holiness, and everyone work out his own salvation with fear and trembling; remembering that it is God which worketh in us. The difficulties, drawbacks, hindrances, and backslidings—the progressions, advances, triumphs, and perfection of this regenerate life, are all mirrored in the Word of God, as encouragement, spur, and reward to him who undertakes, perseveres, and ultimately triumphs; and in its multiform teaching, there is something to meet every case, even in the many-sided aspect of the most varied human nature. It is an exhaustless well, from which the weak, and such as are babes in spirit, may derive milk to nourish and strengthen them—the strong, the active, and the faithful, may draw water to comfort and refresh them—and where the weary and the heavy-laden may find wine, to restore and support their wrestling and tempted souls.

The sickness of Lazarus was evidently representative of that sickness of soul, which is the result of sin. For there is a just and exact correspondence between spiritual and bodily sickness. As in the sick body, when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, so it is with the soul; and, as an apparently small offence against the laws of health may entail severe disease—so with the soul; if a man offend in one commandment, he is guilty of all. Jesus was the physician of souls. ‘They that be whole,’ He said, ‘need not a physician, but they that are sick’ (Matt. ix. 12). Hence, He went about ‘healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of

disease among the people' (Matt. iv. 23)—to represent that He was their restorer and Saviour from 'all those practical disorders of the life, which arose from evil lusts, and false persuasions, *brought into life*'—and hence, as St. Matthew says, 'that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses' (viii. 17): not meaning that He suffered the punishment due to *us*, and thus by a vicarious sacrifice averted upon Himself the just reward of *our* sins—as some would say—but that by taking our nature upon Him, He was able to meet temptation upon the common ground of humanity; and by obtaining the victory over these temptations, He was thus enabled to succour us, and effect our regeneration.

But there is a sickness which is unto death, and there is a sickness which is not unto death. When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He said, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby;' by which He meant that although the severity of the sickness was such that seeming death would result, that death would not be so utter and irremediable but that He, the Saviour of sinners, would be able to restore him from a condition which, as far as regarded all human aid, was an utterly lost one. 'And you hath He quickened, who were *dead* in trespasses and sins' (Eph. ii. 1). Such an act would not only show forth God's power and glory, but would also strikingly exhibit the mercy and long-suffering of a God who waits to be gracious. Our Saviour, therefore, did not immediately repair to the house of Lazarus; nor did He even send a message of life to the sick man, as He could easily have done; but (we are told) He abode two days in the same place where he was; and after that, prepared to go to Bethany.

Meanwhile, He needed not that anyone should tell Him of the condition of His friend. 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.' Asleep! yes, he, the good man, the friend of Jesus, was, as respects the natural processes of life, gone to rest; he had fallen asleep, as the first

martyr, Stephen, fell asleep while he yet blessed his murderers. But Lazarus here represented, in a type, the spiritually dead, of whom it was said, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light' (Eph. v. 14); and Christ Himself was here in bodily presence to wake him out of sleep. His sleep was one from which it was yet possible for him to awake; sleep indeed, numbness, insensibility, but not yet the hopeless sleep of those of whom the Prophet Jeremiah speaks (li. 7), 'And they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the Lord of Hosts.'

Our Lord's disciples (who nearly always took His sayings literally) said, 'Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.' They thought it was the crisis of his disease, from which he would awake restored and refreshed; and so it was, but not in the sense in which they regarded it. It was the crisis; the soul, immersed in self-love in evils and falses, in worldliness and lusts, has become so absorbed in them, that it no longer hears the voice of warning, or of exhortation to repentance; all outward access from spiritual influences is closed, the externals of good and truth are utterly thrown aside, and no pretence is made of either spirituality or religion; while the interiors of the mind are rapidly sinking into the same condition. Should they finally become closed also, there is no further hope—the sleep is one which must be perpetual, and from which there is no awaking. But should there yet be a chink in the ruined habitation of the soul for the admission of celestial light, should there yet remain a faint curl of smoke from the desecrated altar of the heart, there is yet hope of a tardy awakening—there is yet hope that the Divine influence, like gentle showers upon a parched land, may even now have effect, and raise the stubborn soul, when all help seems vain; so that He, who wills not that any may perish, but that all should come to repentance, may yet say, 'For this my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found!' (Luke xv. 24).

The ultimate result of Lazarus' sickness had been already indicated by our Lord's declaration, 'I go that I may awaken

him out of sleep.' When, therefore, it is added, 'Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead,' it is evidently intended to indicate that he was (to all human seeming) dead; dead, indeed, as to all outward indications of life; dead as to all external power to restore him; dead beyond the reach of any influence less than the Divine. As representing the dead soul, he was in a condition which no exhortation, no example, no expostulation could avail to mitigate; the presence of God in the heart, and that alone, could warm its coldness, melt its hardness, or raise it again into life. Christ's approach represents the voice of God speaking to the impenitent heart; He must not remain at a distance, or the resurrection could not be effected; but by some means, of which He has infinite command, He can so dispose, that even the dead heart may become conscious of His nearness, and be roused from its fatal and lethargic slumber.

The grand and glorious words of our Saviour to Martha give the clue to this spiritual renewal of what was seemingly dead: 'Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus saith unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in *Me* shall never die.'

Only of the spiritually dead could this be said—and only He, who was the Author of Life, could say it. And He came, not to prolong our natural lives, but to give unto each and all of us spiritual and eternal life. By His own Divine work on earth, by which He suffered and endured temptation, and glorified His human nature, that it might be conjoined with His Divine essence, He has become the Author of our victory over sin, of our triumph over evil and self—and thus of our regeneration; whereby we shall not come into condemnation, but are passed from death unto life, 'according as His Divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness' (2 Peter i. 3).

There is, however, as we have said, a sickness which is unto death, and a sickness which is not unto death. No man who is absolutely and entirely dead in a spiritual sense, can be brought to life again. No man in whom all goodness is utterly cast out, and the interiors of whose mind are hermetically sealed against Divine influences, can ever be restored again to spiritual health. There must be some remains of goodness—there must be some remnants of conscience—there must be some corner of the heart from which all warmth has not departed—there must be some portion of the proud and self-willed spirit which is softer than adamant; or if otherwise, where can there be a basis for the operation of the Divine influences? If a man obstinately follows evil ways, and confirms himself in them; if he diligently sets himself to shut out God's Holy Spirit, and mocks at it, and profanes it, he becomes dead indeed; he has perversely driven away the only power which can operate upon his benighted soul. Then has come to pass what was spoken by the Prophet Isaiah (xxvi. 14), 'They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise.' For such there is no hope. . . . But the remnant may be very small, from which the natural man first begins to make the ascent from a state of death to one of *life*. The Lord alone knows how small may be the beginnings of the regenerate life, from out of which He will make an angel—as, from a grain of mustard-seed, may spring a tree, in the branches of which the birds of the air take shelter. But it is He alone who can work this change, by the beneficent influences of His Holy Spirit; for, with God, all things are possible: even to the raising to life of the seeming dead.

So also, from a consideration of the analogy which we know to exist between spiritual and natural things, we might judge that the death of the body was of a similar gradual character; and of the truth of the analogy, we can have no doubt. Physicians are aware that the signs of death are sometimes apparently all present, and yet vitality may re-appear after a longer or shorter interval. It has sometimes unfortunately hap-

pened that a person who has undergone all the signs and accompaniments of dissolution, and has been regarded by his friends as irrecoverably dead, has nevertheless recovered life and consciousness, after interment ; and that, although the apparently dead body has been kept above ground, and watched, for the accustomed time before it was consigned to the tomb. In such sad cases, of course, there has been but little change in the appearance of the lifeless body, before interment ; but such change is of a very uncertain character ; and the period of time which elapses before it makes its appearance is also dependent upon very various and occult causes.

Physiologists have distinguished between somatic death (or the death of the entire organism), and molecular death (or the death of its component parts) ; and this molecular death is delayed, or hastened, according to the nature of the disease, and the amount of vitality existing immediately anterior to the moment of dissolution. In cases of disease of long duration, for example, it often happens that the bodily organs are so deteriorated, that they can, as it were, no longer hold life ; but in cases of another kind : such as the sudden death, by drowning, of a person otherwise in robust health ; if the immersion has not been protracted beyond a certain length of time, it is well known that life may be restored after a longer or shorter appliance of the proper means—that is, of those taught by experience ; and notwithstanding that the person may be, to all appearance, dead.

Now, the physiologist, although he is aware of these facts, and also that the last breath is, as a rule, the signal of the cessation of life—as far as human means of recovery go—yet he has not yet been taught by his science to distinguish the precise moment of separation between the soul and the body. That it does not follow immediately on the last breath, is highly probable, and may be considered almost certain. In cases of trance the body may remain as if dead, and yet the soul be, as it were, actively perceptive ; and it is not improbable, that during the struggle of the separation of soul from



body, a sort of spiritual insensibility may occur which may last for a longer or shorter period ; and, until that separation has entirely taken place, the man, although he may be virtually declared dead, yet is not so dead, but that under certain peculiar and little understood conditions a reunion might be conceived possible.

At all events, although past all human aid, and dead, as far as all natural surroundings and influences were concerned, it would be by no means difficult to conceive it an easy matter for our blessed Lord, the Prince of Life, by an exercise of His Divine power, to reëstablish the as yet not fully broken connection between the soul and the body, which would be in all respects a restoration to life—a miracle, which could only be worked by the power of the Lord—yet according to order—and, in all respects, representative of the passing from death unto life ; which spiritual miracle it is the prerogative of the Lord and Giver of Life *only*, to effect.\*

When Jesus commanded those present to take away the stone, Martha, the external, saith unto Him, ‘Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days.’ Knowing how rapidly decomposition sets in in warm climates, we are aware that Martha’s suggestion was not an unreasonable one, and was probably founded upon experience. There is no reason, however, to suppose that Martha’s opinion in this instance was correct. It was given before the stone was removed, and was not repeated or corroborated after the removal. Jesus only replied to her, ‘Said I not, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?’

If, indeed, Lazarus was in the condition suggested above, it would be highly improbable that decomposition had set in ; nor would the spiritual correspondence be otherwise perfect. The decomposition of the body would have been significant of that corruption of the soul, which could not take its rise from mere

\* Let us be perfectly understood. We conceive the state of the buried Lazarus to have been that of one, who though not absolutely and physiologically dead, was yet quite beyond the power of any human means of restoration.



evil and falsity, but from profanation only—the profanation of goodness and truth, which is that sin against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven a man. Had he seen corruption there would have been no possibility of recalling him to life; then would he have been dead indeed. But however dead the soul may be, however evil and false, unless these evils and falses are confirmed—unless good and truth have been profaned, and an utter corruption, demoralization, and degradation of the soul have ensued—Christ still stands at the door and knocks; there is still hope that the lethargic soul may hear, and open the door, be it ever so little, so that He, who came to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, might yet enter, and bind up their spiritual wounds, and heal their spiritual diseases. For, saith the Prophet Isaiah (xlii. 3), ‘A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory.’

Then they removed the stone from the tomb; and when He had held communion with His Divine nature—in which communion He brought into operation that union of love with wisdom which was the essence of His Divine-Human character, and which gave its possessor all power over sin and death—he cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ And the dead heard the voice of love, and the words of wisdom; the dead felt the genial warmth of Divine affection, and opened his heavy eyes to the dazzling rays of Divine truth; and he that was dead came forth, in obedience to the omnipotent command. Bound, indeed, was he, hand and foot, with grave-clothes—fettered with garments unfit for the living,—like a soul hampered with rigid ceremonials and narrow creeds—the body of a Church from which life has departed: his face was bound about with a napkin—by which every perceptive faculty of the mind was restrained or concealed, all the mental powers narrowed, and the spiritual vision darkened. But the Saviour finished His gracious purpose, and consummated His miraculous interposition by saying, ‘Loose him, and let him

go.' Then were his bonds severed, then were his fetters broken, then was his enfranchisement complete, then was he passed from death unto life.

Thus was this great spiritual drama brought to a sublime conclusion, and thus is the pregnant language of Scripture vindicated, laden with deep meaning—with absorbing interest—with transcendent importance. Grand as is the episode in its literal sense—wondrously varied as are the emotions it calls up in every breast, as we follow the sisters through their successive phases of alarm, suspense, anxiety, and grief, to despair; then upwards through hope and faith to ultimate triumph and joy—the deep spiritual meaning of every word of the narrative cannot fail to convey to our minds admiration, consolation, and peace. The solemn tones of our Lord's announcement to Martha, 'I am the resurrection and the life!' are heard through the whole wonderful story, like a glorious refrain; they sound in the ears throughout like the keynote of some mighty organ through a noble anthem—and they bring serenity to the tumultuous soul, like a supernal voice which utters above the roar of a tempest, 'Peace, be still!'

In moments of temptation—in hours of darkness—in the depths of despair—in the valley of the shadow of death,—we may, if we will, have this luminous form by our side, and this still small voice in our ears, 'He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in Me, shall never die.'

## LECTURE XXI.

### WHO IS GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

‘At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’—MATT. xviii. 1-3.

THE incident here described is not without a parallel in the teachings of our Lord, and for an obvious reason. It was the case in a marked degree with the Jews of that day, that self-righteousness had eaten like a canker into the heart of society, and certain classes of men had persuaded themselves that they were more fit for heaven than their neighbours. When the Pharisee and the publican met at their devotions in the temple, the Pharisee praised God that he was not as other men are; he was no extortioner, no unjust man; he was not even like this publican. In other words, the outside of his cup and platter were cleanly washed, and what had he to do with the inside? The publican, on the other hand, presented no fair exterior, but he was washed within; and our Lord’s commentary on the transaction we know to have been, ‘I tell you this man’ (*i.e.*, the publican) ‘went down to his house justified rather than the other.’ For God looketh not to the outward appearance—He seeth not as man seeth, but He looketh at the heart.

The proud Pharisees, the learned Scribes, and the astute lawyers, were wont to look down upon their poorer neighbours as from a more lofty spiritual pinnacle, and to say by their looks, if not by their actual words, ‘Stand aside, for I am

holier than thou.' Utterly wanting in real spirituality of heart, they entirely mistook their own condition, and by a fatal error, believed that their own measurement of themselves was the standard by which they would be judged by God Himself. It was a comfortable doctrine that they were the elect, and that other men were publicans and sinners, and it is one to which the human heart is prone in all ages of the world. We cannot say we are free from it ourselves; indeed, we cannot be free from it, for it is one of the snares and deceits of the natural man, and one from which we can only free ourselves by putting aside the natural man, and delivering ourselves from its fatal thralldom.

But this was an evil which our Lord well understood, and which He, on several occasions, combated, setting before His disciples, as well as before the more obdurate Scribes and Pharisees, an example of what a spiritual nature really was. He Himself always gave them an example of meekness and humility; He showed them that they must be servants—that they must ever be ready to minister one to the other—that He who would be chief among them must be the servant of the rest. He Himself, their Head and Chief, in a sense far beyond anything they could themselves understand, by washing their feet, gave them the clearest and most direct proof that, in spiritual matters, self was to be entirely subordinated to a desire for use and benefit to others. 'If I then, your Lord and Master, wash your feet, so ought ye to wash one another's feet;' or, in other words, to consider it your first duty to lay your whole life and powers at the service of your fellow-beings; believing that, by so doing, you are but carrying out the object for which you were placed here among them, and also best fitting yourself for that condition of happiness which you hope to attain in the world to come.

But this is not our natural bent. By nature we all crave to have court paid to us, to have rule over others; we are ever prone to think better of ourselves than others, and to consider that more is due to ourselves than we owe to others. This, of

course, arises from the great master-passion, love of self, which is that very evil we have to conquer and subvert. If we could once persuade ourselves that other human beings are formed in the same mould as ourselves—that our fellow-creatures are as much the care of our common Creator as we ourselves are—that any fancied superiority in ourselves was due to no particular merit of our own, but was, as far as it was real, a boon for which we should be grateful, and which we should endeavour to repay by using that superiority for the benefit of others—then we shall no longer rate ourselves above the rest of mankind, but shall find our delight in being ministers to the wants of others less favoured than ourselves. In other words, we should have conquered self—we should have obtained a victory over the natural man—we should have expelled the old Adam—we should, in short, be *converted*.

When, therefore, the question arose among the disciples, ‘Which is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ it was referred by them to their Master; who at once replied by calling a little child unto Him, and setting him in the midst of them, saying, ‘Except ye be *converted*, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven!’

The disciples had, before this, had lessons in true greatness. Already had our Lord assured them (Matt. v. 19), ‘Whosoever shall do and teach the commandments, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.’ To which also He had appended as a corollary, ‘That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ They need not, therefore, have asked the question of our Lord, if they had attended to His teaching; and it is another added to the many proofs that their understandings were dull, and their minds little receptive of the beautiful doctrines, at once so new and so striking, which they were continually hearing from His mouth. Even after the present lesson it seems that the same question recurred again—for St. Luke tells us (xxii. 24), that even after the Holy Supper, ‘there was also a strife among

them, which of them should be accounted the greatest'—when our Lord replied to them, 'He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve'—a reply, in spirit, not unlike that which He gave on the occasion to which we have previously referred.

But we are justified in supposing that the reply of our Lord upon this occasion was a surprise to His disciples—and one which was not by any means palatable to them. It was too great a fall to their innate pride of heart to be told that they must lay it all aside, and become simple and docile as children. Doubtless, at first blush, they would be ready to misinterpret the injunction. 'Children!' they might exclaim. 'We are men—we have put off childish things—we cannot become children again.' To them, to be like little children, would be as hard as was the saying to Nicodemus that he must be *born* again. Can a man be born twice? Can a man be twice a child—or twice an infant? But this reasoning would have arisen from the error of confusing childishness with childlikeness. To be childish is only allowed in children; it is the pardonable prerogative of immaturity—the weakness of the young, who have had no experience—who have as yet learnt no wisdom, but who are yet children in growth, and children in knowledge; from whom we expect only that charming kind of fatuousness which sits becomingly upon a child, but which in an adult would be simply pitiable. The ungrammatical prattle, the inconsecutive chatter, the tiny interests, and the simple objects of a child's amusements, are all characteristic of the early years of our life, and are therefore natural and beautiful: but in an adult they would be painful, shocking, and suggestive of idiocy. But yet this is what would first strike those who were told they were to be as little children; whereas, what was intended was, solely, that they should be *childlike*—that is, innocent, simple, truthful, loving, and trusting—for these are the natural qualities of the unsophisticated nature of man, and these are the qualities the child exhibits ere the corruption of worldliness, the contamination of evil influences, the discovery and



inordinate love of *self* steps in and deteriorates the beautiful nature which we all possess in our earliest years.

Childhood is, indeed, a great gift to all God's creatures, and which they all in turn possess. However stern, hard, inflexible, and unsympathetic a man may have become from the influences which the world itself may have exercised upon his heart, there has been a time when he was the reverse of all these ; when he was a simple child, happy in the love and tenderness of those around him—contented with the narrow circle of childish interests, innocent of evil in thought or intention, in word or in deed—having no fear of the future, from the full trust in the present, and in the care of those about him. Yet how has he changed ! All these beautiful qualities, which make up childhood, have departed : apparently they are dead in him, lifeless, extinct. He has chased away that which, if cultivated, would have fitted him to be an angel, and he has welcomed and hugged to himself all those qualities of heart and soul which are the reverse of those in which he grew up from infancy ; and with what object ? A man's object in life is happiness. Everyone runs after that which he thinks will afford him most happiness. But, unfortunately, ideas of happiness in our corrupt state are false and futile. One man places his supreme happiness in riches, which perish and fade away ; another, in honours, which are but a visionary shadow ; others, again, still more foolishly, in wicked pleasures, which stunt the soul's growth, and unfit them for heaven. How few find pleasure, in after-years, in the simplicity they possessed in childhood—in the humane sympathy which was then their natural characteristic—in the innocent enjoyments, free from worldly glare and glitter, which sufficed to content them in earlier years—in the faith and trust in those about them which once afforded them supreme content, and unmixed happiness !

No ; it is unfortunately the case that we cannot be always children. We have been children once, in order that we may pass through the phase of innocence, and have, as it were,



experience of innocence. Although man is born to evil as the sparks fly upward—although man is a fallen creature who cannot raise himself from his lost position without Divine aid—nevertheless he is brought into the world in a condition of personal innocence; and during the years of later infantile and of child life, he remains more or less in that condition; so that he is thus in a condition to receive from above such promptings and inspirations as could not possibly be afforded in the adult and hardened condition.

On the plastic and harmless mind of a child the Lord impresses lessons of good and of truth; in their young hearts are stored up spiritual principles which are available to keep them, at a later period of life, from wandering far from the paths of holiness. Were it not so, no man could possibly arrive at the kingdom of heaven. Were all men inducted into the world at the age when their eyes are opened to perceive and distinguish good from evil, they would infallibly, in consonance with the dictates of their fallen nature, choose the evil, and neglect the good, and be irretrievably lost. But God has graciously ordered it otherwise, and, in His infinite wisdom, has ordained that we should pass first through this golden period of childhood, and thus share the benefits of the instilment of Divine and spiritual principles and thoughts into minds most fitted to receive them.

It is true that, as time goes on, and we pass from this golden stage of our existence into the realities of life; the cares of the world, the love of self, and all the disturbing elements which so largely enter into our active battle of life, by degrees dim these early impressions—by degrees supplant them, and place in their stead evil propensities, unworthy objects, wicked thoughts, and false principles. But yet there is always left a remnant of those spiritual goods which we came to possess in our youth—they never quite leave us; and we always have the possibility of their being revived and brought once more into prominence—of their being so awakened from the torpid slumber of adult age as to be presented to our minds in new

and beautiful forms, which recommend themselves for our acceptance and cultivation, in the midst of the shallow and artificial glamour of more perishable things. And this is their value to us—that they are *there*—that, even in the wildest orgies of a career of sin, we have yet within us principles of good and truth, which, though dormant, may yet be awakened, and bring forth fruit to repentance and a new life.

Therefore it is that our Lord declares, ‘Verily I say unto you, Except ye be *converted*, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ For, observe, in our first childhood, we need no conversion. All the beautiful qualities which have been referred to as existing in the child, are there by virtue, as it were, of the nature of things, of the order of the creation.

We are born personally innocent and good ; but we, by degrees, show that we inherit principles of evil, dependent on the fall ; and our personal innocence and goodness gradually leave us, and give place to the universal hardening which encases the heart, sears the spirit, and places us all alike without the pale of heaven.

To be restored, therefore, to our pristine state of innocence, we must be *converted*. As children, we needed not conversion. As children, therefore, we were fitted for heaven, and doubtless would be received there under suitable conditions of instruction and perfecting, accomplished by its influences. But, as adults, we have all passed the Rubicon of the Fall, which has separated us from heaven ; and therefore we must all be converted, and return to that state which we have hereditarily lost. We must be convinced of the superiority of those qualities which we once possessed and have now forfeited ; and we must feel an urgent desire to repossess them and make them a part of our better nature. But we can never repossess those qualities upon the same terms as we had them before. We cannot be real children again, as we have seen, without being not only childlike, but also once more childish. But having once learned wisdom—having once tasted of the tree of know-

ledge of good and evil—it is impossible that the bitter-sweet taste can ever depart from us. We cannot drink of the waters of Lethe, and forget that we have known evil as well as good—we cannot even cease to remember the good, nor can we ever forget the evil: but we must learn to refuse the evil and to choose the good—and thus we shall fulfil the purpose for which we are placed here. For the innocence in which we were born was the innocence which could not do wrong. It was the innocence which springs from ignorance of evil. Hence its charm, even to the wicked, who never fail to admire good in the abstract, although they give themselves over unrestrainedly to evil.

Such innocence is enviable, admirable; but it is not the highest kind of innocence. Such innocence is the innocence of the lamb—but it is the innocence of the brute generally; for it is irresponsible—it is a necessity—it arises from no freedom of choice—it is a *gift* from God, given in the particular case of children, with the wise and merciful purpose which has already been alluded to—viz., to afford a virgin page for the impression of good thoughts and spiritual principles; which impressions cannot be ever effaced without the coöperation of the recipient, to his own destruction and ruin.

But when we are converted and become as little children again, we are no longer in the innocence of ignorance. We cannot lay aside our knowledge like a garment, but we must be at once innocent and wise. We must have seen not only innocence, but we must also have a full appreciation of guilt. Our innocence must not only be a free gift, but also a deliberate acquisition. Our innocence must be not a mere necessity of circumstances, but also the prize of success in a fierce struggle, in which we have come off as more than conquerors. We are no longer in the position that we *can* not do evil—but in which we *will* not do it. Our innocence is no longer irresponsible, like that of the brute—but a chosen better part, which must be maintained and upheld against all difficulties and temptations, even if it should cost us tears of blood.

This is the innocence of wisdom. This is the innocence to which we must be converted. This it is which is meant by becoming as little children. Of such as these is the kingdom of heaven composed—of innocent children who have been taught wisdom, and of wise people who have taught themselves innocence. We who have passed the stage of childhood's innocence, have it yet in our power to become converted to the innocence of wisdom ; we have it yet in our power to become once more as little children, when we forsake the false and shallow wisdom of the world, and resume once more the angelic qualities of love, trust, truth, simplicity, and innocence, which once possessed ourselves, and which we still admire and reverence in our children. Thus, and thus alone, can we fit ourselves for heaven. Thus, and thus alone, can we 'wash our robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

## LECTURE XXII.

### ON THIS ROCK WILL I BUILD MY CHURCH.

‘And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’—  
MATT. xvi. 18.

IT is a phenomenon not a little remarkable, that in this world results seem very often out of all proportion to their causes. ‘Behold,’ says the Apostle (James iii. 5), ‘how great a matter a little fire kindleth!’ and indeed a spark is sufficient to produce a conflagration—a shade of doctrine is sufficient to establish a heresy—a word is basis enough upon which to build a world-wide organization.

Among the Apostles there were all possible varieties of character, all shades of mental specialty. Some represented faith, some love, some were full of trust, some steeped in incredulity, some sedate and constant, some impetuous and fiery. All but one were true, and sincere in the desire of their hearts to receive from their Master the words of eternal life—to follow in His footsteps, and to imitate in their humble way His great example—to extend His doctrine, and to teach His sayings. When He asked them if they also would leave Him, their answer was, ‘Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!’ And although, like erring mortals as they were, their faith failed them in critical moments, it was no proof of disbelief or innate depravity, but only the result of the weakness of their human nature, which could not cope with great difficulties, could not meet important crises with the equanimity which they demanded; and their temporary back-

sliding was only the signal for a renewed and more earnest stride forward towards the goal.

We have in the Gospels records of such backslidings and imperfections in more than one Apostle. Thomas would never believe unless he could thrust his fingers into the wounds of his risen Lord. Some disciples incurred His rebuke for exhibiting too much ambition, too much desire of domination ; others for their want of faith, which prevented them from casting out devils ; others again for their want of perception, and the hardness of their heart. How often He addressed them, ' Oh ye of little faith ! ' and when the last supreme moment came, they all forsook Him and fled. How far from perfect was this little band, called out of the world by the Lord Himself ! How weak, how feeble the staff on which He seemed to lean, when He committed to this small imperfect band of followers the things belonging to the future Church on earth, the spreading abroad of the good seed of His heavenly doctrine which was hereafter destined to revolutionize, not society, not the Jewish nation only, but the whole race of mankind.

But if the disciples proved themselves but weak and erring, there was one among them whose errors were either greater than those of the rest, or at all events, they are, for valid reasons, more strictly recorded than the faults and weaknesses of any other of the disciples. There was one who exhibited in his many-sided character a singular mixture of impulsiveness and of hesitation, of valour and of cowardice. Peter, the representative of faith and truth, on more than one occasion, called upon himself the serious rebuke of his Master, because of his hastiness, his want of trust, his indecision. Like the other disciples, Peter was carried away by the beauty of Christ's teaching ; he was ready, when called, to make sacrifices for His sake ; and when our Lord saw Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, and saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men—behold, they straightway left their nets, and followed Him. Peter, too, was a humble-minded man, ready to perceive the

imperfections in himself; and his own want of holiness and righteousness came home to him with great force, when, in the miracle of the draught of fishes, he recognised the power of Christ, and was constrained to cry out, falling down at Jesus' feet, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' (Luke v. 8). Our Lord reassured His conscience-stricken disciple, and repeated to him His promise, saying, 'Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch *men*.'

In no case did the Apostle Peter exhibit more forcibly at once the strength and the weakness of his character, than on that occasion when in the fourth watch of the night, the ship being on the lake, tossed by the waves, Jesus went unto them, walking upon the water. The trembling disciples cried out for fear, saying, 'It is a spirit;' but when Jesus spake unto them, saying, 'It is I, be not afraid,' then the impulsive Peter was the first to recover his courage, and even to exclaim, 'Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water! And He said, Come.' But his courage was of short duration; his faith, which had effervesced at the recognition of Christ, suddenly sank again when he saw the wind boisterous, and the sea tossed with waves; and in proportion as his courage failed, as a necessary concomitant, his body began to sink beneath the waters, and a wild, despairing cry succeeded his shortlived confidence, 'Lord, save me!' And the Lord did save him, only rebuking his weakness with the kindly expostulation, 'Oh thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt!' Too bold—and too timid! Too confident in himself in the moment of safety—too timid when the danger came! He should have reversed the order—he should timidly have left the safety of the ship, and boldly have stood upon the raging sea, leaning upon the supporting arm of Christ.

Peter's appreciation of our Lord's mission appears under somewhat conflicting lights. In the portion of the Gospel from which our subject is taken, it would seem that he, at all events, if none other of the disciples, fully understood the character of Christ. His famous acknowledgment of his Lord,



in answer to the distinct challenge, 'But whom say ye that I am?' is acknowledged by his questioner as complete, satisfactory, and wholly true. 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!' What statement could be more explicit? what acknowledgment could be more decisive? what recognition could be more intelligent? And yet how imperfect was the Apostle's judgment—how erroneous his understanding of all but the grand fact of Christ's divinity! Surely to one so apparently far-seeing, seemingly so faithful, might be entrusted some of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven! Surely to the bold confessor of the Godhead of Christ might be confided some of the counsels of the Father respecting the Son. And so from that time forth began Jesus to show to His disciples how that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. But this very man, who had just before recognised Christ as God, immediately displayed the error, the obliquity, the shallowness of his judgment, by rebuking his Master, saying, 'Be it far from Thee, O Lord; this shall not be unto Thee.' And immediately he, the sinful man, on whom many would foolishly feign that the Church was built, must have fallen, withered beneath the just indignation of his Lord, who was fain to turn upon His weakly-bold disciple, and adjure him, 'Get thee behind Me, Satan! for thou art an offence unto Me; thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men!' What! shall the poor sinful disciple presume to correct the counsels of Infinite Wisdom! Shall the finite, erring creature dare to arraign the plans of self-sacrificing mercy, formed by the Infinite Creator! Yet, doubtless, did our Lord, in His wrath, remember mercy, and so qualify His rebuke as not to crush His impetuous follower.

'Simon! Simon!' said his Lord on another occasion, yearning with pity over his contradictory qualities, over his kindly trust and dangerous self-confidence. 'Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not' (Luke xxii. 31).

Here we see plainly our Lord’s view of Simon’s character, and how fully He appreciated all the dangers which he incurred by his too implicit trust in his own unaided strength, and by his tendency to rush into danger without proper preparation to meet the foe. He was one to whom, humanly speaking, Christ could not trust to support His cause—one who would be likely to fail in the hour of trial—one who, while he appeared the fastest and most trusty of friends, was yet so imperfect, so vacillatory, so unreliable, that the cause entrusted to him would be likely only to suffer injury at his unaided hands. How, then, on such a *man* could our Lord build His Church! How, knowing him as our Lord shows Himself to have done, can we imagine such a man should have been singled out as the *rock* which should be the foundation of the Church on earth! Rather a shifting quicksand, unstable as water; no strength, no support, could be derived from such a basis; and the edifice, so founded, could not fail to have fallen, totally, irretrievably, and great would have been the fall thereof!

Again did the self-sufficiency of the Apostle discover itself upon the solemn and important occasion when our Lord showed His disciples that great example of humility by washing their feet. For Peter, ever ready to correct his Lord, and to measure Divine things by his own little standard, exclaimed, ‘Lord, dost Thou wash *my* feet?’ Jesus, knowing his not unworthy motives, and that it was through ignorance he spoke, gently chided him, saying, ‘What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.’ But Peter was obstinate, and would not be corrected without a sterner rebuke—he resisted the will of the Lord, and wrapped himself up in his own cloak of self-confidence, and exclaimed, ‘Thou shalt never wash my feet.’ Jesus answered him, ‘If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.’ Then it was, as in every case, when his understanding had asserted itself in vain, his heart was touched—he grasped suddenly the fact that his Lord must know better than he; and he exclaimed remorsefully, ‘Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!’ (John xiii.).

But it was in the last supreme hour of trial that Peter showed most fully his weakness, his want of true courage—his absolute cowardice. Not only could he not watch one hour with his Master, at His bidding, when His spirit needed most comfort and support; but even when the Lord said, ‘My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with Me;’ it was *not sufficient* to keep his slumberous lids from falling. His words were valiant, but his deeds were far outweighed by his professions. When he saw danger afar off, he was bold as a lion—but when it came near, he was timid as a fawn. ‘Though *all* men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I not be offended.’ Here was a friend, a trusty supporter, who at all events could be depended upon, if protestations were of any avail. Surely a man who thus foresaw the event as it would happen to others, would be prepared for the same event in himself, and would avoid it. And if Peter had had more trust in God, and less in himself, he would not have been handed down to us as a typical example of the fall to which all are subject, who trust their own hearts over-much.

His Lord saw through the flimsy veil, and gently, sorrowfully, said to him: ‘Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice.’ One would have supposed that Peter, with his protestations yet on his tongue, would have been horror-stricken at such a prospective charge from the lips of Christ Himself; that he would have fallen at His feet, and prayed that he might have been preserved from such treason. Had he done so, his prayer would doubtless have been heard, and he would have escaped what was afterwards so deep and damning a cause of remorse. But he did not do so; but, according to his character, strong in his own sense of security—blinded by his overweening self-confidence—proud of his own self-derived valour, he hesitated not to contradict his Master, setting his own poor ignorance against His omniscience,—measuring the yearning of God’s love by the poor standard of his own puny affection; and he replied: ‘Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee!’

Likewise also said they all—but Peter stood foremost—Peter alone, as far as we know, positively denied Him. The others forsook Him, and fled—so did Peter; but we do not read of the others as we do of Peter, that he began to curse and to swear, saying, 'I know not the man' (Matt. xxvi.).

How bitterly must those words of the Saviour have recurred to him which He had spoken, in Luke xii. 8, 'I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth Me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God.' What remorse must have been Peter's—what anguish for those three days before the resurrection! What agony of mind, that he had denied his Saviour, and was unforgiven; that our Lord's last look upon him was a look of sad reproach. Can we doubt that his first thought, when he saw his risen Lord, was to throw himself in the dust at His feet and implore forgiveness? and can we also doubt if his prayer was granted?

Such, then, was Peter. True-hearted, and well-meaning—but impetuous, unstable, and weak. Doubtless in after-times, when he was converted, he became a really valiant supporter of Christ, ready and willing to lay down his life for His sake; but he was *not* converted at this time—the understanding and the heart were not in accord in their estimate of his Divine Master; he was toilsomely ascending to the point of conversion or regeneration, but had not reached it. 'When thou art *converted*,' the Lord said to him, 'strengthen the brethren' (Luke xxii. 32)—and this, just before his impulsive declaration of fealty, so soon to be broken. He was not yet regenerated—but through these trials came his ultimate strength; and who can doubt that this last great trial must have been as a fiery furnace to him, out of which he emerged purified, strengthened, regenerated. Well did he fulfil his Lord's enjoinder in after-times—when he was converted! Great were his services to the Church, in later years, when it needed support, after its Head was removed. Then, indeed, did he strengthen the brethren—then did he *feel* himself forgiven—and then, in pro-

cess of time, did he die with Christ, according to his promise—to be raised again with Him to eternal life.

It must have been in a moment of especial illumination and inspiration that the Apostle made his well-known confession of faith in the Divinity of Christ. ‘Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ It could have been but of small importance to our Lord what man should say of him—and yet, taken in its proper sense, it was all-important. For did not Christ descend and take our nature upon Him, to save sinners? and how could He save them, if they denied Him? if they had no true ideas of who *He*, the Son of Man, was? They knew Him as the Son of Man—would they also know Him as the Son of God? And if they did not thus recognise Him, how could they come to Him that they might have life? In the fulfilment of His gracious plans they must do this, or all would be vain. Our Lord needed not to ask Peter what men thought of Him; but He did so to elicit from Him that statement or declaration of the truth, to which He could Himself set His seal, to be handed down as the rock on which His Church was to be founded. Men were yet undecided *who* He was. ‘Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias; or one of the prophets.’

Alas! all in vain. To say that He was John the Baptist, or Elias or Jeremias, might be with the intention of giving Him honour as a prophet, mighty in word and in deed; but could John the Baptist, or Elias, or Jeremias save them from their sins? No! they had been *sent* (as God’s messengers) for that very purpose, and all the stamp of Jehovah’s authority had failed, signally failed, in them, as a foil to the evil tendencies of mankind. Esaias had pleaded, Jeremias had denounced, John the Baptist had cried ‘Repent!’—but all in vain. And now all these were dead—and those who never would believe that Christ could rise again, inconsistently announced Him to be a *risen Prophet*—one of the old prophets returned from the dead. This was no pledge of salvation. This was no *point d’appui* from which the Saviour could move the world to repentance and newness of life.

And so, having elicited from them the opinion of the world, Christ proceeded to condemn it, by a further question : ' All this say men, men who are in the world, and of it ; all this is from the hardness of their hearts, and their unbelief. They have the Scriptures, they know what is therein written of Me ; they might, but for their want of faith, recognise Me therein ; but they cannot. But ye have not so learned Me. Ye have been with Me, and know Me better ; ye have heard the words of life from My lips ; surely, ye recognise the promised One. And whom say YE that I am ?'

The question was addressed to them all—not to one in particular—probably all would have answered to the same effect, save Judas. But it was Peter who stepped out from his brethren and became their mouthpiece : it was Peter, who, impulsive in good and in evil alike, avowed his belief, and ratified to the full the trust our Lord reposed in His disciples—gave Him a plenary confession of faith, and bound all the disciples in a common bond by the completeness of His declaration. It was Peter who answered and said, '*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*'

That it was an inspiration our Lord Himself declares, for He said, ' Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.' Peter was not better than his brother disciples—in many respects he was their inferiors ; but his impetuosity here guided him aright, and to our Lord's appeal he spoke the thought of his heart, and registered the full, the unadorned, the naked *truth*.

And, indeed, there is no passage in Scripture more important—this spontaneous confession, by a man, of the divinity of Christ. As Christ, by becoming man, enabled man to take Him as an example, by the imitation of which he could overcome sin and the devil—as Christ, by taking our nature upon Him, elevated that nature, and made it capable of doing what *He* did, thus enabling it to rise to the highest pinnacle of holiness—so *Peter*, by the acknowledgment of Christ as the



Son of the living God, made Christ's life available for the saving of all mankind, by enabling all who shared our common human nature to recognise Christ as he did, and to place themselves within the pale of His saving grace, and His Divine influence. And thus Peter became a typical MAN—typical, as Adam was of death, as Christ was of life. For Peter became the type of the power of mankind to escape from the death of the first man, and to avail himself of the life of the second man; and his confession sealed and settled, once and for all, the successful issue of Christ's mission, the everlasting and blessed results of the Incarnation.

Then did our Lord make that great and crowning statement—then did He give that gracious and invaluable assurance, 'And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Simon, the hearer, he in whom was faith, grounded in the affection of truth in the will, he it was who had made the confession; but now he was henceforth Peter, who had established a rock of truth, upon which the Church could stand and defy every infernal influence. This was the Rock on which the Church was built; not on Peter, the erring and yet far from perfect disciple. The powers of hell tried hard to overthrow Peter, but he, as one of the Church, stood fast upon this Rock and defied them. The Rock was the Truth, for so does a rock always signify in Scripture; the Rock was the great paramount Truth, enunciated by the disciple; Christ Himself is the Foundation of the Church, 'for other Foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. iii. 11).

And we are all profitters by this stable edifice, which is thus founded upon the Rock of Christ's Truth—'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit' (Eph. ii. 20-22).



## LECTURE XXIII.

‘EXCEPT A CORN OF WHEAT FALL INTO THE GROUND AND DIE.’

‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.’—JOHN xii. 24, 25.

THE illustration given by our Lord in this passage, is one of the many gems of His teaching; and although, like all other gems, it has a native beauty and brilliancy of its own, it is at the same time enhanced by the setting. The words of our Lord, perhaps as often as any words, may be taken in an isolated manner, and will be found to be instinct with beauty and instruction; yet there are few passages in any writings which, if taken quite alone, may not be more or less wrested from their original meaning by those who have an object in so doing. But these words, although they have an obvious reference to the catastrophe which was to be the result of His present undertaking, are also applicable to important matters of personal interest to us all; and, as often happens, a great landmark in the history of the earthly career of the Divine-Human Saviour, corresponds to a grand event, which, at one time or other, marks the current of the existence of every man whom He came to save.

In this chapter of St. John’s Gospel we have an account of several circumstances which pointed to the approaching consummation of Christ’s work upon earth. In the first place, it was near the Passover, and the loving Mary had performed that act of consecration, which our Lord Himself declared she had kept against the day of His burying, and that it should be

had in remembrance wheresoever the Gospel was preached. Immediately succeeding this, came the triumphant entry into Jerusalem as a king sitting upon an ass's colt. 'And now' (saith He) 'the hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified;' and He illustrates His approaching glorification by the passage which heads this Lecture.

It is not intended, however, to dwell upon this primary aspect of the subject. The glorification of the Lord is a matter which, in any case, it is hard for us to understand; it is a subject which we can never fully comprehend, in virtue of our finite faculties, and one which concerns us chiefly in its results as bearing upon our own salvation. The glorification of the Lord we can but dimly trace by the light of the more luminous views of truth afforded by the Holy Spirit in these last times, by virtue of which we know sufficient to understand, somewhat, the bearing of that glorification upon our own lot; that it was not a self-glorification in the meaning of the term such as we are most apt to apply to it, but a Divine process of order, the object of which was to consummate and complete a plan, solely intended for our benefit and salvation. The steps of our Lord's glorification were self-denying, painful, and laborious, and the end to be gained had in it nothing of the nature of self, or of the exaltation of even the selfhood of God: but it was, as it were, the placing of the Godhead in such a position and attitude as would best enable it to be of advantage and service to man, who sorely needed it—to man, who without it must soon perish: it was the abnegation of self in the highest possible degree, in the Infinite, who underwent all the painful steps, without which glorification could not have been accomplished, in order that by suffering He might effect good to His creatures—by pain in Himself, He might lessen ours—by the death of His *body*, He might thrust aside death from *our souls*.

Bearing all this in mind, we may perceive that though it behoves us not to be ignorant of the nature of the glorification of Christ, so far as it establishes in our minds just views of its gracious and unselfish character, the mystery of that glorifica-

tion is one which we can scarcely expect to search too closely into with advantage : it is too high for us, we cannot attain unto it.

But, in a secondary sense, allusion is evidently made by our Lord to His resurrection, as to one of the most important steps in the process of that glorification to which I have referred ; and inasmuch as this is a condition which will be shared by everyone of us, it will be more useful to consider the subject from that point of view. For He was like *us*, in that He suffered the death of the body, and we shall be like *Him*, inasmuch as we shall rise from that death to a new and higher immortal state—a glorification—if we reach the goal for which we were intended—which will result in a grand development of our powers, and our adaptation to a mode of life far transcending anything we can conceive in our present condition ; a glorification, not, indeed, in the sense in which Christ was glorified, but in accordance with our finite nature, and with our limited faculties and powers.

It has been urged that the illustration conveyed is false to nature, inasmuch as the corn of wheat does not die, but only undergoes a chemical, or rather a chemico-vital, change. But it would not be difficult to show that, while the grain itself becomes corrupt, and in its natural form entirely disappears, the germinal part, or that which quickens, is something immaterial—something invisible to ordinary eyes, and even microscopic to the sage who knows where to look for it ; and the change which it undergoes is a process of life to which the grain itself is entirely subservient and subordinate.

The grain of wheat is that which, converted into bread, affords nourishment and sustenance to our frames ; and the value of wheat depends upon the size of those lobes of the grain, which, to common eyes—to eyes uneducated, as were those of the disciples addressed—constitute the whole grain, or corn. The ordinary agriculturist does not stop to inquire into the mysteries of the germ, with its plumule and radicle, but only knows that the wheat he sows does not return to him

as he sowed it, but in a new form, marvellously multiplied. The wheat placed in the ground is wheat expended—lost : because, practically, the grain dies, though, really and scientifically regarded, the apparently dead grain is reproduced above-ground many fold—is the progenitor of the full ear, which is the husbandman's reward. It is but the gross nourishment, laid up for the germinating plant, which dies—which becomes, that is, so chemically changed, that its elements are absorbed, and re-appear in new forms. Thus regarded, the parallelism between the corn of wheat and the body of man seems closer than a mere cursory consideration would indicate ; and the resurrection—not of the body, but of the soul—is thus seen to be in beautiful correspondence with the natural processes of decay and reproduction in the vegetable world. 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.'

If it could be supposed that our *bodies* had any share in the resurrection, the analogies of the corn of wheat would not hold good. But, like it, we fall into the ground and die, as to our natural bodies ; no part of that grain survives the changes of decay ; and, from a mere external point of view, the grain utterly disappears. But it had within it the germ of a higher life, and that survives ; and not only survives, but is advantaged by the decay of the enclosing parts, finding in that decay its opportunity of ascending and bearing fruit.

How different is this view of death from that which looks hopelessly forward and sees nothing but extinction. For in this age there are not a few, who, trusting rather to their own imperfect powers of argument, entrammelled in a false logic, and starting from false analogies, involve themselves in conclusions which enchain them to a mere material world, from which they see no means of escape. For them the only fruit that they can hope to bear is that crude production which is but the outcome of their most imperfect probation—the more imperfect, since the false views they cherish only the more narrow the mind, and cramp the intellect ; they are but mildewed

grains, their ears such as Pharaoh saw in his dream, withered and blasted with the east wind of unbelief, false imaginings, and hard self-intelligence. Such corns of wheat are indeed *alone*, destined to bring forth no real fruit, but to abide barren alike in hope and in results.

Without giving due attention to the parable by which our Lord thus illustrates the fruits of good living and holy dying, the succeeding words might seem somewhat inconsequential; but, after these remarks, they can no longer appear so. 'For,' He says, 'he that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' But now we are able to understand that they follow in strict sequence; for as the corn of wheat abides alone until it falls into the ground and dies, so do our lives fail to be perfect until an analogous consummation is effected. In *this* world we have a certain life—a life full of temptations, and often full of sorrows and disappointments. We look forward from year to year, hoping and planning, too often as though this was to be our rest; while it is but a place of labour in which rest may be earned; and our hopes and plans mostly end in failure and regret. Nothing that we can do here has any permanence, or any stamp, as it were; our joys and our sorrows are like writing made in water—and however solid and permanent our undertakings or our purposes may appear to us here, we know full well that they are as fleeting shadows. Those who were before us, and of whose deeds we read in history—where are they now? and where are the effects and the results of their lives? It is true that, by the accumulation of infinitesimal influences, great results are often ultimately attained—but we are speaking now of the private thoughts, the individual history, of every man. Such histories are in every case but means to an end—and the end has followed even when, apparently, the individual was blotted out. How many a fair promise has been to all appearance ruthlessly cut down! how many a carefully educated intellect has ceased to be, just as we looked for fruit; but the fruit would nevertheless follow—the corn of

wheat has fallen to the ground, and fruit will be the result, though not in our sight.

On the other hand, the lives of some are apparently strewed with flowers. Sorrows and disappointments seldom approach to disturb the mind ; worldly pleasures so occupy the soul as to leave scarce anything to be desired—from a worldly point of view ; riches, plenty, troops of friends, ease, leisure, and perfect health—all these may so far combine as to cast out thoughts of the future, and to supersede the aspirations for a higher and more spiritual state. Then it is that the warning of Christ becomes necessary : ‘ He that loveth his life shall lose it.’ Evidently our Lord refers to this life. Life is too valuable a gift to be scorned, or to be otherwise than loved—but the life of this world may be too much loved—and is so, whenever it is not subordinated to the life to come. ‘ Our days on earth are a shadow ’—though to us they are apt to seem to be the only substance. ‘ Behold,’ says the Psalmist, ‘ Thou hast made my days as a handbreadth ; verily, every man, at his best, is altogether vanity. Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is ; that I may know how frail I am ’ (Psa. xxxix. 5, 6). And, indeed, the best consideration to counteract an inordinate love of life is some such thought as this. For, indeed, the love of life means the love of what is earthly in our earthly life ; by which love the heavenly is cast out ; and, like Esau, we sell our birthright for a mess of pottage—for a consideration not for an instant worthy to be balanced against the tremendous stakes of life everlasting. By setting too much store by our life in this world, we are exhibiting a marked preference for the corn of wheat abiding alone—and disregarding the much fruit which the same corn should bear in its true and lawful order and condition.

And ‘ he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal,’ but not as the same life. The life which a man is called upon to hate, is the life which he has inherited from his fallen progenitors—it is the old Adam, with all its affections and lusts ; it is this life which must be forsaken, and ex-



changed by the new birth for the real life of the soul, which alone can endure for ever. And thus our Lord illustrates His own glorification in a manner which we can most readily understand, namely, by the process of our own regeneration. For in that process we must first have a death of the *old*, before we can have a birth of the *new*. To be born again, we must die to sin, and be renewed in righteousness. We must learn to hold in abhorrence all that we may recognise as warring against the Spirit, and above all the love of self. But as we are constituted, the love of self is that ruling passion which embraces the life of this world ; and if we hold to it, we shall be grasping the shadow and losing the substance : so that we are even called upon to hate it, in order that, by its renunciation, we may be enabled to substitute for it that holier love, that higher life (not inborn in us), which teaches us to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and to set our affections on things above.

For a man is such as is his ruling love ; if it is of earth, then it must sink downwards, dragging him with it, for he cannot be dissociated from it. He is what his love is, it is his very being, and that being, by nature, is the love of self and the world—a love which cannot exist above—a love which, if a man cling to it, he shall lose it. But although it is his love, and therefore his nature, he must so learn to change his heart, as that he shall even *hate* it : and to do this, he needs more than his own strength ; indeed he is incapable of so changing his nature by his own aid alone—it can be done only by the agency of the Holy Spirit working in him. This is the condition of life eternal—that a man shall hate the life, or love, into which he was born, and shall seek to change his earthly inherited life for a heavenly, God-given life. Truly might Christ say, ‘ If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me ;’ and again, ‘ He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.’

The expression of this (ver. 25) second verse is one of those few passages which are repeated in the records of each

of the four Evangelists in nearly the same words. It was probably an illustration often used by our Lord, who would seek, by iteration, to impress upon His hearers the necessity of a new birth, the vanity and nothingness of the life of this world, and the all-importance of a heavenly life. The Jews required much exhortation upon these points, inasmuch as they were eminently natural in their views of things, and would require many assaults upon the stronghold of their selfish prejudices before they could be driven from them to seek shelter in non-natural modes of thought and unwonted restraints of life. An earthly kingdom was their ideal, over which their Messiah was to reign, to confound their Roman oppressors, and to restore the glories of Mount Zion. But our Lord never wearied of pointing out to them the vanity of these desires, and that there was something far more important than those seeming desirable ends.

And which of us are not prone to share the Jewish unbelief and hardness of heart? which of us are not, upon occasion, willing to risk heaven, and to stake our salvation upon some earthly toy, some bauble not more worthy than theirs? For to us, no less than to them, is the warning given, and we, no less than they of old, may apply to ourselves the challenge—‘For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’ (Mark viii. 36, 37).

## LECTURE XXIV.

‘IN MY FATHER’S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS.’

‘In my Father’s house are many mansions ; if not, I would have told you : I go to prepare a place for you.’—JOHN xiv. 2.

IT is often remarked that the sacred Scriptures contain but few and scattered references to the nature or constitution of heaven ; and it has been adduced by those who disbelieve in its existence, as a confirmation of their negative views, that so little is found in the Bible explanatory of the locality, the character, or the employment of heaven. And it is undoubtedly true, that those who desire curiously to know any particulars of that future state or condition to which they hope to attain, will not readily find their curiosity gratified by a perusal of the sacred record ; which, while it everywhere recognises a heavenly existence, does not express itself with any detail, or with any minuteness describe what it implies by the expression. The way to heaven is everywhere pointed out, the desirableness of attaining heavenly life is everywhere insisted on ; but the manner of life, the nature of the duties and pleasures of its inhabitants, are not specifically described. Why this should be so, we are not prepared to explain.

Some have argued against the probability of a future state, because the word ‘immortality’ is so seldom used in the Bible, and never in the Old Testament ; but however that may be, there can be no doubt respecting heaven, for there are few words more frequently employed, both in the Old and in the New Testament, than heaven and heavens ; to which may be added the not unfrequent periphrases, as instanced in the

passage above quoted ; and although the expression is used evidently in more senses than one, there can be no doubt, from an examination and comparison of the passages, that a vast number of them are applied, in both Testaments, to an abode intended and prepared for the righteous, after the death of the body—the dwelling-place of the Almighty, to which He will ultimately take His faithful people, to be with Him for ever and ever. Thus, by the Old Testament account, it was into heaven that ‘Elijah went up by a whirlwind’ (2 Kings ii. 11), and in the New Testament we read that our Lord Himself ‘was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God’ (Mark xvi. 19).

However little, then, we may explicitly gather from the Scriptures regarding the nature of Heaven, however veiled may be the expressions used regarding it, we can nevertheless by no means afford to eliminate the word from our sacred writings, without, indeed, totally destroying their coherence, and omitting one of their most prominent and characteristic features ; and no one can possibly take the Bible as the guide of his life, without a firm faith in the existence of some place, state, or condition of blessing and happiness hereafter, which answers to the term in question.

And whatever may have been the reasons which, in infinite wisdom, caused this reticence as to the mode and manner of life hereafter, that reticence was evidently not intended to be kept inviolate through all generations ; and, in process of time, it has pleased God to reveal much of wondrous interest upon this above all most interesting topic. And it is by comparing such knowledge with the veiled expressions of Scripture it assumes a new and enlarged meaning, and throws a reflective corroboration upon the doctrine of heaven, which already appealed to our judgment and reason, as being borne out by all that has been revealed to us of the character of the Divine order.

The *plurality* of the heavens is one of those facts thus corroborated ; for not only do we read in Scripture of the heaven

of heavens, or inmost heaven, the dwelling-place of the Most High, which yet is unable to contain its King and Lord ; not only do we read (in 2 Cor. xii. 2) of a man in Christ, who was caught up to the *third* heaven, where he heard unspeakable things ; but also, in the prayer taught to the disciples by our Lord Himself, the plurality of the heavens is distinctly implied, when He bids them say, 'Our Father, which art in the *heavens*'—for this is the correct translation, though not that of the Authorized Version, which too often reflects the prejudices and beliefs of the translators. And this ray of light illumines many avenues of the mysterious future, and is the primary division which conducts to hitherto unknown ramifications and subdivisions ; the scope of which is briefly indicated by the words of our Saviour in the opening passage.

The majority of Christians, unable to fathom the hidden meanings of the expressions and figures of Scripture, are agreed that such knowledge is too high for them, and imagine that they cannot attain unto it. They are content to believe that it was never intended that they should pry into the secrets of man's future state ; and, thinking that such things are carefully concealed from them by Divine Wisdom, they are unwilling to *attempt* to break the seal of secrecy ; while, at the same time, they are hopeless of any success, should they be hardy enough to make the endeavour.

The consequence of this feeling and belief is, that the ideas entertained by most Christians upon this important subject are vague in the extreme. Unable to initiate in their own minds any ideas of a reasonable nature as to a future state—eminently failing in the spontaneous imagination of conditions dependent upon an existence in which the corporeal body takes no part—they fall into errors of the grossest character, and form conceptions which have no other foundation than the baseless phantasies of their own dreams. And this arises from the fact that all men are naturally unable to conceive of spirit, as such, finding it quite impossible to divest their minds of corporeal accompaniments and bodily associations. And this is specially

the case with the class of persons of whom we are speaking ; and they are therefore driven to the hopeless task of arguing from the natural to the spiritual—of building their theories of soul out of their experiences of body. Hence the dreamy notions of the individuality of spirit—the false ideas of a sudden and inconceivable change of nature—the groundless belief in an instantaneous enlargement of the faculties—and the natural, though unfounded, hope that all, except perhaps the notoriously wicked, pass immediately into heaven, when they leave this sphere.

But there is a fitness in things—and while the thoughtful reasoner cannot fail to perceive that throughout all nature there runs a regular arrangement, subject to no fitful or capricious disturbance—a Divine order, exquisitely balanced, and upholding the perfect beauty and harmonious working of the universe,—there also comes into view another great and general principle, no less wonderful, no less inviolable, and no less important. This is the principle of *continuity*. ‘*Natura nihil fit per saltum*’ is an ancient adage. Nature does nothing by a leap, but always goes smoothly on its way—nowhere leaving gaps to be bridged over by art, but always steadily and conscientiously, as it were, performing its work ; without any slovenly shifts or imperfect links, such as may be perceived in the works of art. This is no less true of the spiritual than it is of the natural, and is of the utmost importance. For, by its application, we learn that the condition of man, after death, is not one of sudden exaltation—not an instantaneous burst into fulness of bloom or ripeness of faculties ; but, on the other hand, that the same gradual process of development goes on, uninfluenced by the change effected by death—except in so far as that the spirit, now unclogged by the bonds of earth, has larger powers, and less limited faculties, so that it is able to make more rapid bounds than it could while yet in the flesh. But the *man* is the same—he is neither canonized nor sanctified by the mere article of death ; he is not instantly invested with all knowledge, because he has cast off the material body—nor



is he at once placed in a position of immeasurable superiority because he is no longer a dweller on earth, but a denizen of another, and a hitherto unknown, world.

No ; a man no more changes his *soul*, than he does his *body*, by any sudden bound. When the man, crippled from his birth, was restored to strength by the power of God, it was a great miracle, which excited the astonishment and wonder of all who witnessed it ; and so, also, could a deformed and blackened soul suddenly become an upright angel of light, it would be a miracle, only more wonderful ; and a miracle which only could place in stronger and more direful relief the vast multitudes of those upon whom the miracle was not worked.

The law of continuity, then, is the law of Divine order. Man prepares himself under the influence of the Holy Spirit, here—and hereafter, under the same, but perhaps, more direct influence, continues to be prepared for his ultimate destiny.

We have seen already that there is a distinct recognition, in the Lord's Prayer, of a plurality of heavens—and in numberless passages, especially in the Psalms, the expression 'heavens,' rather than 'heaven,' is that used. 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh them to scorn' (Psa. ii. 4) ; 'O Thou that dwellest in the heavens' (cxxiii. 1) ; 'Praise ye the Lord from the heavens ; praise Him all ye His angels' (cxlvi. 1, 2)—are examples of our meaning. And this expression is but the first process of that subdivision indicated further by our Lord in the text. For as there are heavens, so also may we conclude that those heavens are not altogether dissimilar in character to their earthly antitypes ; and that, as men here are characterized by a certain manner or principle of arrangement—so also men hereafter will fall into an orderly classification—a systematized constitution—upon a perfect basis, both as to equality and justice ; being, in fact, the outcome and reflex of the Divine order itself. For, on the one hand, we have reason to infer that earth is but a shadow, as it were, of heaven—and therefore that the moral aspects of society here are not altogether unlike those of society in heaven ; while, on the other, we may be

assured that here they are infinitely less perfect, inasmuch as here, men are guided chiefly by the outward character, whereas in heaven, the heart and soul themselves will be patent to all—and the real, interior, *man himself*, will be the basis of a classification, as by Him who ‘will fan them with a fan’ (Jer. xv. 7); ‘Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather the wheat into His garner’ (Matt. iii. 12).

But ‘many men, many minds;’ and, even in the imperfect society of earth, men of good proclivities cannot always associate freely and happily together. And degrees of goodness are innumerable, from the perfected saint, whose likeness to Christ has become so complete that he is fitted to dwell, as it were, in the closest companionship with Him—to the weak brother, whose manifold temptations have left him in danger of being sifted as wheat by the wiles of Satan. Moreover, men have not only not all equal powers of resisting evil, but they also have not all the same capacities for happiness; and the preparation made in this life must result in a spiritual constitution which does not fit all men equally for heaven—or the same heaven, or the same grade in the same heaven. Let us not be understood to imply that anything of evil can be found there, for all evil must be purged before heaven can be reached; and although it is said by Job, ‘The heavens are not clean in His sight’ (Job xv. 15), the expression can only be taken to suggest the positive holiness of the Lord, in comparison with which everything else must be unclean—even as the whitest linen appears dim beside the driven snow.

It follows, therefore, that there must be a classification of men in heaven, of a far more perfect kind than can ever be expected to be found upon earth. The soul is a more subtle thing than the body, and its relation to its surroundings must be much more close and complete than our relation *here* to the objects of sense and touch. For we must ever bear in mind that heaven is not a place—a locality, a tangible spot of the universe, beyond the stars—but a *state*—a condition—a moral, ethical, and psychic relation to an internal and interpenetrating

atmosphere of goodness and truth. If it could be imagined, for the sake of illustration, that souls were lighter and more ethereal according to their spirituality, and to their freedom from earthly dross, we could also picture them to our minds as *rising* to higher atmospheres of celestial happiness *in proportion* to their holiness and sanctity—or, on the other hand, gravitating to lower grades of heavenly blessedness according to less delicate forms of spiritual fibre which they have acquired by their life on earth. And, following out the same illustration, those would come together who had most in common, whose characters most assimilated—and who, therefore, would find most pleasure and happiness in each other’s society. For it is the inmost quality of the soul that affords the most binding, and the most lasting bond of true companionship—and in heaven alone can this inmost quality be truly tested, and fully realized. And therefore we may safely judge that, hereafter, men will find their most perfect delight in the society of those with whom they have the most perfect spiritual sympathy—the most complete *oneness* of intelligence, of desire, of aspiration, and of feeling.

But among the millions of glorified souls, and of spirits of the just made perfect, there must also be almost infinite varieties of mental constitution, infinite degrees of spiritual perfection, infinite gradations of the power of, and capacity for, heavenly life. And thus must the societies of which the heavens are composed, exist and consist in proportion to all these degrees, gradations, and vanities. ‘*In My Father’s house are many mansions,*’ not all equally lordly, not all equally adorned. There is the palace of him who was found worthy to rule over ten cities, and that of him whose capacity entitled him to but five cities; and we may be justified in the belief that while some will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, others will be the happy though humble citizens, whose sole aim is to impart to those around, the happiness which he himself enjoys to the utmost of his capacity. Each mansion is the abode of harmony and peace, and no discordant element

can, by the nature of things, enter there ; for it is only by *affinity* that such societies can exist—it is only by mutual love, and faith, and trust, and belief, that such societies can cohere, or that such mansions can be otherwise than divided against themselves.

The happiness, therefore, of heaven depends upon mutual benefit, mutual help, mutual service, mutual love. It is the perfection of the practice of that law of love to the neighbour, so often enjoined by our Lord as the sum of the Law and the Prophets. No envying—no bitterness—no thought of personal aggrandizement, can by any possibility exist to mar the perfection of that harmonious working, of which every heavenly society is a *model*. And it follows, therefore, that we can never hope to enjoy the pleasures and delights of the heavenly mansion, until, either here or hereafter, our minds are entirely divested of all those baser passions to which we are all more or less subject. No one is entirely free from them here—but we have reason to hope that the endeavour to resist, and to escape from them in this life, will be furthered by the Divine mercy—and will aid in our ultimate escape from them hereafter.

But the mansion we shall occupy depends upon ourselves ; our capacities for heavenly enjoyment depend upon our power to receive life from Christ, who came, not only that we might *have life*, but that we might have it *more abundantly* : and our reception of this life from Him is in our own power, so far as we endeavour to refuse the evil and to choose the good. May we all so live that we may have reason to ‘know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens’ (2 Cor. v. 1).

## LECTURE XXV.

A MAN CAN RECEIVE NOTHING EXCEPT FROM HEAVEN.

‘A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.’—  
JOHN iii. 27.

WHEN we look something more than cursorily at the constitution of the mind of man—when, indeed, we look into our own minds and endeavour to analyze the network of faculties, emotions, and feelings, of which it seems to be made up, we shall naturally be led to the great question of *cause*. Whence are these faculties and emotions? From what are they derived? To what are they tending? It was but a few short years back when we are conscious that they did not exist,—or, if they *did* exist, it was in so rudimental a form, that we are at a loss to recognise, in those simple elements, the powers we now possess—of combination—of will—of induction—of thought.

The gradual evolution of the faculties, from the unconsciousness of infancy, to the full development of adult intelligence, is a matter so wanting in novelty—so common—so ordinary—of so everyday occurrence—so *natural*, as some would say, that we seldom stop to inquire into it—seldom feel arrested by any special wonder: or, if by some out-of-the-way incident our interest is momentarily excited, it is soon dulled again by the matter-of-fact conclusion that these things are but the inexplicable phenomena of mental and physical laws, which it is the business of the metaphysician, or, perhaps, of the physiologist merely, to inquire into, and co-ordinate.

Again, our souls inhabit bodies which are a marvel to us

not only from the intricacy of their construction, but also from the consciousness they afford us of an isolated individuality. Everyone has his own little world of soul and body, into which he can retire from the rest of the world, but from which he can himself never escape, howsoever he may wish to do so. They together constitute his selfhood, his *ego*—they are ever present with him—they are his own. And yet it cannot fail to strike us that, whether body, or mind, or soul, we ourselves had no part in their production, no part in their development, no part in their origin. Our parents are commonly called the authors of our being, and yet a slight consideration is sufficient to convince us that this can only be said of them in a very partial and imperfect manner—for they themselves are as ignorant as we are of the whence and the wherefore; and the existence of their children is to them as great a problem as is their own.

In this world we are surrounded with wonders—the natural world is an eternal and ever-present miracle; and although we are ever studying it, and endeavouring to probe its secrets, we only succeed in upturning the extreme borders of the veil. We only gather, like children on the seashore, a few shells, or a few pebbles, from the sands which margin the great ocean of truth; and when we have done our utmost, we are as full of wonder, as full of marvel and of unsated curiosity, as we were at first; and cannot but end by discerning that while our faculties are but finite, our speculations reach far away to the infinite and the unknowable. But there are men in this, as there have been in past, ages, who have ill brooked this limit to their speculations and researches. In the pride of human intellect, they have predetermined that all things shall have a cause in the regions of the natural; and they indulge in the expectation that all things, themselves included, will be found to have an origin in a fortuitous combination—a chance medley of pre-existing, and indeed self-existing and eternal elements.

For this idea is flattering to their self-love in two ways: it gives them the feeling that they have probed to the bottom of the



great problems which inevitably occupy the thinking mind, and it gives them an ownership in themselves, as it were, which is not subject to any previous claim—since such a claim evidently could not be put in by elemental atoms, which are themselves driven hither and thither by a blind and never-ending vortex. And the constitution of some minds is, to discover in Nature an all-powerful Mother, and an all-sufficient Cause; the tendency of some intellects is to be satisfied with the clumsy device of a development without a developer, an evolution without an evolver, a creation without a creator. *We* cannot create an organism of the lowest kind; but Matter can evolve organic life. *We* cannot produce the simplest vegetable form; but Matter, aided by force, can evolve an oak. *We* cannot comprehend the inmost nature of a germ; but Matter can develop the crowning form of man, and can endow him with faculties and aspirations, which are, no less than his body, established upon a basis of a purely physical kind!

To those who have higher views, it would almost seem impossible that anyone should seriously hold such fancies, which are alike dishonouring to the Creator of all things, and a disinheritance of our race. For they imply a denial of a God, and a non-recognition of Spirit, and they substitute for these things a mere material, earthly, blind, and unconscious nothing, which they dignify with the names of Matter and Force. All the beautiful laws of adaptation and fitness are lost in a mist of error and folly; all the comforting delights of a providential supervision are sacrificed to a miserable delusion, incapable of proof, as it is incapable of producing a single one of the results so boldly claimed for it—a delusion which rests only on the authority of a so-called scientific faith in a pseudo-philosophic hypothesis. For what is gained by such an abortive and thankless faith? Only this, that man's intellect is apotheosized; for he pretends that he has thus sounded the unfathomable depths of wisdom, and claims that there is nothing too deep, nothing too profound, nothing too incomprehensible for the piercing glance of an inductive and unaided reason.

But there is in some of us a higher instinct than this—and by instinct I mean, not the unreasoning intelligence of animals which goes by that name—but a rooted conviction, implanted in our minds, and which we recognise as having been set there for a special purpose.

Those whose views of the cause of things soar above the grovelling level of mere materialism, are able to conceive and to appreciate indications of a much more noble—a much more satisfactory origin and purpose. They have at once a trust and a claim upon some Superior Being, whom they recognise as their Father and Guide. They feel the hand of an intelligence and a wisdom superior to theirs, which not only made them what they are, but had an object in so doing. They feel that all about them bears the impress, not only of wisdom and truth, but also of goodness and love ; and they are therefore convinced that the object for which they were created was not a light one, not the temporary plaything of a variable and capricious heathen god, but the grand and solemn and eternal mould of the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. The heathen represented their Olympian divinities as alternately laughing at the mistakes and follies of man, and wearied out with vexation at their own want of control over their crimes and their sufferings. The *Christian* believes that he is formed in the image and likeness of God, the object of His perpetual love and care ; and held as a precious thing for ever in the hollow of His hand.

But no one who recognises the necessity of a God, or the possibility of a heaven, can fail to entertain a belief in their near dependency upon that God, or of their close communion with that heaven. The greatest philosophers have ever been the humblest of men ; and it is pride which denies a divine parentage and a kinship with heaven. It is the pride which desires to have no master ; it is the pride of a bastard independence ; it is the pride which says, ‘I am my own—I owe no man, nor no God anything.’ It is the pride which arrogates to itself all the credit, not only of body, but of soul—not

only of the graces of person, but of the forces of intellect ; which says, Of my own powers I achieved this or that—of my own skill and foresight I have kept my body in health—of my own transcendent genius I have overtopped my fellows, and have become as a god unto them. It is the pride of Lucifer.

For if we admit that there is something which we cannot see with the bodily eyes, something intangible, but which, like the invisible air we breathe, is yet as essential to our moral life, then we cannot fail to perceive that that something must bear the same relation to man and his destinies, as man does to this material world upon which he works, and upon which he founds the trophies of his intelligence. The highest triumphs of his genius are but imitations of what exists around him, enhanced and spiritualized by his inner consciousness of an imagined ideal ; the greatest marvels of his intelligence are built upon successful discoveries of the modes of working of some power in the outworks of nature ; and the highest and most transcendent intellect recognises that there is yet the unknowable, which must ever baffle its mightiest efforts, a veil which no human power can effect to lift—the unfathomable, the infinite and the eternal, before which he must bow for ever prostrate in the dust.

And yet, if he accepts his position, and recognises his destiny, while he loses the pride which binds him to earth with an iron chain, he gains wings by which he may soar to heaven, and a patent of sonship which makes him a child of God. For the knowledge of Truth will make him free, and a knowledge of the Father will cause his recognition as His child. For he will learn that God hath said, ‘ I have created him for My glory, I have formed him ; yea, I have made him ’ (Isa. xliii. 7). Not only that God made man in His own image and after His own likeness, but also, in the words of the Prophet Zechariah (xii. 1), that ‘ He stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundations of the earth, and *formeth the spirit of man within Him.*’ And thus here, and in numberless other places in the Word of God, He announces to us, in words

which cannot be gainsaid, that He made not only the earth and the heavens, but also man ; and not only the wonderful and intricate tabernacle of the soul, but also the Spirit itself—that soul, endowed with power to reflect and to reciprocate the Divine attributes, the love of wisdom, of which the human soul is a capacious, though finite, receptacle.

And every reasoning man must concur in this Divine claim, and bow in allegiance to this Divine ownership ; and the poetical truth of the Greek philosopher was echoed from Areopagus by the Christian Apostle, when he said to the Athenians, ‘ For we also are His offspring ’ (Acts xvii. 28).

But it is a little thing that we should acknowledge ourselves to be creatures of God—created, that is to say, by Him. All who do not scoff at the Bible, or deny their God, admit that much. But there do too many stop. They admit that, as part and parcel of the sentient universe, God is their universal Father ; but all that flows from this proposition they systematically deny, if not in words, at least in their actions and in their lives. For does it not follow that if we are the children of God, we owe to Him not only an allegiance, such as is due from a subject to a sovereign, but also an obedience of the most reverential kind, such as a child owes to its parent, only of a far higher and more binding character, in proportion as the gifts we receive from Him are of an infinitely more lofty and abiding nature than anything we can receive from an earthly parent ? For who is the real Author of our being ? Is it not God ? ‘ seeing that He giveth to all, life, and breath, and all things.’

But it is not only that we derive our material bodies, the clothing of the Spirit, from a heavenly source, but every attribute of our mind is alike drawn from the same fount of goodness and wisdom. We cannot boast ourselves of our excellence as though it were of ourselves. Beauty of person is a great gift, but it need not make its possessor vain, but rather thankful that the hand which arrayed the lilies of the field with a glory surpassing that of Solomon, should also have adorned the face

and form with a loveliness which attracts the beholder. So also the graces of the soul—mental power, wit, genius—all these are gifts from God, and to be so esteemed and valued, with the remembrance ever before us of the saying of the Baptist concerning our Lord that ‘A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from Heaven.’

This is indeed the secret of the humility so much prized by all who are spiritually minded ; for are we not all alike the recipients of Divine gifts ? If one be more richly endowed than another, that is no reason why he should be puffed up with pride ; the excellence of his gifts is not a credit to himself ; he did not, by any merit of his own, attain to a superiority which overtops his fellows ; and to be unduly puffed up by such excellencies is to abuse them by putting them to an unworthy purpose. To possess them is no merit ; to use them rightly is a duty, which, properly performed, brings, indeed, no vanity nor pride, but carries with it the consciousness of having fulfilled the object for which we were so endowed. For who ’ (asks the Apostle) ‘maketh thee to differ from another ? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive ? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it ?’ (1 Cor. iv. 7). Be not therefore puffed up one against the other.

And this should not only render us proof against a foolish vanity or an unworthy pride in the possession of gifts which we are bound to receive with meekness and to use with discretion, but it should also teach us tenderness and brotherly love to others less richly dowered than ourselves. Our deserts are not greater than those of others, and yet God, in His mysterious providence, has seen fit to give one riches, while another has the heritage of poverty ; to grant to one the blessing of health, while another pines on a languishing bed of sickness ; to endow one with a spark of transcendent genius, while another has not the common understanding of his race ; to mould one in a form of grace and beauty, while another groans under a natural or diseased-bred repulsiveness of aspect ;

to make one happy in the enjoyment of activity and freedom of movement, while another is crippled and maimed it may be from birth ; to enrich one with children and friends, and to condemn another to walk through life solitary and unloved. All these varieties we meet with in our everyday intercourse with the world ; and a little reflection must convince us that the poor, the sick, the unfortunate, the sorrowful, the halt, the blind, and the solitary, are no less the children of God than the prosperous, the happy, and the rich. And if these latter use their gifts so as not to abuse them, they will not forget that to no better use can they be put, than to comfort their less fortunate brethren—to minister to the needs of the sick and the sorrowful—to have compassion upon the poor and the needy—to offer brotherly aid to all who are in distress and tribulation—to bind up the broken-hearted—to be eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and brethren and sisters to fatherless and the childless.

For may we not perceive that one object of these apparent defects, of these apparent sources of misery and unhappiness, is, to afford scope for the exercise of the gifts of Heaven ; to allow those who have to minister to those who have not ; to admonish the possessors of talents that they are not their own, but lent by Heaven ; not to be buried in a napkin, but to be returned to Him who gave them, with usury ; to remind them that ‘a man can receive nothing except it be given him from Heaven’ ; and that the gifts of Heaven are intended for use, to blossom and to bear fruit, to aid alike the giver and the receiver by the blessing and sweet incense of an unselfish and a loving charity ? Without objects upon which a man can exercise his superior gifts, they would lie fallow and waste—they could not be utilized—they would miss the purpose for which they were given ; and by the practice of the virtues for which scope is thus afforded, we are preparing ourselves for the perfection of Heaven, for the fruition which can only come of preparation ; and thus the gifts of Heaven become our blessing, and the acknowledgment that we derive them from thence will greatly aid to conduct us thither.



And that which is true of our exceptional qualities, of these things which we esteem as gifts, is no less true of our commonest attributes, without which we should not be living beings at all. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and no less so is the gift of life itself, which is the foundation of our being, the spring of our existence, the basis of all that distinguishes us from the clods around us. 'In Him we live and move and have our being'—for He is life, and from Him only can we derive life. Were it not that there is a continual flow of life from Him who is the Fountain and Source of Life, just as there is a continual flow of light and warmth from the terrestrial sun, we should perish at once. A man can receive *nothing*, not even existence, unless it be given him from Heaven. For God is not only Creator, but Sustainer, and only He who is the Author of Life can suffice to keep it in existence; only He who is the Creator of the world can animate, sustain, evolve, or develop its powers, its forces, and its faculties; and whatever term we use for the phenomena we observe in ourselves and in the world around us, we must always bear in mind that it is futile to attempt to dethrone God, but that it is the truest wisdom to acknowledge Him in all things, to bow humbly before Him, and above all to remember that 'Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's' (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

## LECTURE XXVI.

### THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS.

‘When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory : and before Him shall be gathered all nations : and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats ; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.’—MATT. xxv. 31-33.

THERE is scarcely any people in any age who have not possessed the belief in a future judgment. Whether the idea has come down to them as the remnant of a more perfect form of religious belief, or whether it has been a result of conscience acting on a reasoning mind, matters not ; the idea of a time of reckoning for the deeds done in the body is an universal one. And such a belief is doubtless well ordered, for it cannot be otherwise than a salutary check upon the natural proclivities of mankind. For men in this world are always prone to take their own pleasure, and to follow their own wills in any direction in which they may lead them, careless of, or indifferent to, the consequences which may result. And if conscience be eliminated from the human mind—if a sense of responsibility more or less remote be removed from the heart or the memory—there is no length to which a man may not plunge into evil. But the remembrance that sooner or later there will be a judgment or reckoning is a curb upon the evil-doer, which will not let him rest in peace, but, like the sword of Damocles, hangs over him, and renders him restless and uneasy as long as he perseveres in a course of sin. Not that the *fear* of such judgment is, or can be, the highest, or even a high incentive to a good life ; but while it is, on the one hand, a useful

deterrent from evil in those even, who although desirous of following good, are yet liable to fall into sin, it is, on the other hand, a necessary check upon another class of persons, who require incentives of this kind to drive them out of the broad way which leads to destruction—who, not content to be led in the way of good and truth by the cords of love, require to be forced from the delight of evil-doing by the terrors of God's law. For the Lord adapts His means of grace to all classes of persons; and although *all* goodness should be spontaneous, and of choice, nevertheless, the beginning of good may sometimes spring from feelings of a lower kind, which cannot be carried into the progressive advance of the Christian life.

Our Lord was now near the completion of His ministry upon earth. He had taught many things; He had given forth many wonderful sayings to His disciples, and to the people at large; and now the end was near. In this chapter of Matthew we have several parables, all of which have reference to the end of things, to the consummation of affairs of earth, and their consequent future result. Of the ten virgins, five had provided oil for their lamps, and five had neglected to make this provision. Five had borne in mind that the time was approaching when it should be said, 'The bridegroom cometh;' and five had carelessly forgotten the nearness of His approach, and were altogether unprepared to receive Him. In other words, five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

Again, our Lord speaks of the delivery of talents to men who were expected to make use of them during their Lord's absence. For the time would assuredly come when He would return, and demand an account of the way in which the talents had been used. To those who had had such an appreciation of the trust committed to them as to please their Lord, were addressed those impressive words, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;' while to him who had slothfully hidden his talent in a napkin came the dread sentence, 'Cast ye the un-

profitable servant into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' And then comes the crowning parable of the sheep and the goats—the terminal lesson—the moral and corollary of all the teaching of three years, in which is distinctly set forth a doctrine of future rewards and punishments—not upon a gross and material principle, such as is generally imagined, but upon a truly spiritual and internal basis, by virtue of which the meek and lowly, the humble and the obedient, the merciful and the poor in spirit, shall reap a reward, such as those who are without these qualities arrogantly imagine they have *earned* by a selfish and time-serving external and negative sanctity.

And then we are told, that it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, He announced that the time was at hand when He should be betrayed to be crucified.

We may, therefore, regard the parable of the sheep and the goats as the last testament of our Lord, delivered with the express intention of emphasizing the fact of a future condition, in which the mode of life followed here would tend to regulate and fix the state succeeding it ; of giving once at least distinct recognition to a future state, in which men will no longer, as here, follow good or evil at their own choice, but enter a condition already determined for them by their previous spontaneous acts. Such a distinct recognition of a future state is not common even in Scripture ; and although the human mind has an innate belief in the immortality of the soul, and although the generality of our race possesses a strong faith in future judgment, the present parable is, doubtless, the strongest direct confirmation of such doctrine which we can find anywhere in the sacred writings.

But yet it must be observed that our Lord's words really do not profess to indicate literally what will hereafter take place, but they contain a parable, which is couched in the correspondent language of Scripture, and therefore requires explanatory comment before it can be properly understood. We have placed before our minds a grand and solemn scene :

‘When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory.’ The Son of Man was about, just at that time, to undergo every humiliation; to be buffeted and scourged, and to be crucified. All that was necessary before His glorification could take place; but our Lord looked beyond and through this, to a time when He should come in all His glory—with all His holy angels with Him. The same, or rather a similar, expression is used in the 16th chapter of this Gospel, 27th verse, ‘For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels, and then He shall reward every man according to his works.’ Here the expressions, ‘in His’ (that is, His own) ‘glory,’ and ‘in the glory of His Father,’ are used synonymously, as meaning the same thing; and the fact that the latter quotation appears to be qualified by the singular verse, ‘Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom,’ only shows that the whole verse and all its different expressions have spiritual meanings, apart from what appears in the letter.

The *Father* signifies the Lord as to love. ‘As the Father loveth Me, even so love I the Father.’ The Son signifies Truth, as when He says of Himself, ‘I am the Way, the *Truth*, and the Life.’ To come in the glory of His Father, then, plainly means His coming in all the glory of Divine Love—Love which was Himself also, when, after His glorification, Divine Truth would be once more reunited with Divine Love. Then, indeed, was God such as we read in the Apocalypse, ‘Whose eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace: and His voice as the sound of many waters . . . and His countenance as the sun shineth in his strength.’ Then was He such as we read in the vision of Daniel (vii. 9): ‘The Ancient of Days, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne was like the fiery flame; and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from

before Him : thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him : the judgment was set and the books were opened.'

Such is the glory of the Lord—the pomp of the Son of Man, *glorified*—a grand picture, which, while it strikes our imagination, yet falls far short of the reality ; for we are always to remember that the material terms used are but significative of the spiritual qualities of which He is the Fountain and embodiment, as it were. And fire and flame, which are so largely used in such descriptions, are only indicative of that Divine *Love* which emanates from Him, and warms and vivifies every soul which basks in its beams ! So that, indeed, it may be said that the substantial reality transcends our finite and natural comprehension, in the same degree that spiritual and celestial things transcend those which are natural and material.

But yet the Son of Man it is who shall be Judge. Although He come in the glory of His Father—although He come clad in the attributes of Divine Love also, it is as Divine Truth that He effects judgment. And the Son of Man is the Lord as to Divine Truth. This is clearly shown in John v. 22, where we read, 'For the *Father* judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.' And again, in the 26th and 27th verses : 'For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself, and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, *because He is the Son of Man.*'

In the glory of His Father, then, the Lord will come, but, moreover, having 'all the holy angels with Him.' The angels, however, be it remembered, are the spirits of just men made perfect. When our Lord was the Son of Man upon earth, He was accompanied by a few poor fishermen—a small band of illiterate disciples, who possessed but an imperfect and feeble faith—but who were yet those upon whom He relied for the propagation of His heavenly doctrine among mankind. Such



as they were, such were probably at one time the holy angels who were to accompany the Son of Man when He came to judgment. As the Son of Man, when yet upon earth, suffering and poor, had about Him poor and weak disciples, so should the Son of Man, when He comes in His glory, have about Him holy angels, glorified souls of once weak and suffering men. But when a king appears in state, surrounded by a glittering court, it is not the king's glory which is enhanced by the splendour of those who derive all their glory from *him*—and so our Lord's glory cannot be increased by the presence of His holy angels. Still less can the company of angels aid our Lord in His great work of judgment. He is the Son of Man—the Light of Divine Truth, out of whose mouth goes a two-edged sword. He, and He alone, knows what is in man—He, and He alone, can discern the multifarious springs of action, and motives of conduct, which make men what they are—and He, and He alone, can judge.

‘Behold, He puts no trust in His servants, and He charged His angels with folly,’ says Job (iv. 18). But ‘who is able to stand before the holy Lord God?’ This is the consideration which we ought to place before our minds. ‘If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who should stand?’ asks the Psalmist (cxxx. 3). ‘But,’ he adds, ‘there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.’ If, indeed, the Lord came in all the glory of His majesty to judge mankind, we could not stand before Him—for ‘all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.’ If the Lord should come to judgment in all His glory, all would be consumed, and none could stand—if in wrath, He did not remember mercy, all mankind would be consumed before Him. But just as when Moses desired to see the glory of the Lord, the Lord assured Him, ‘There shall no man *see* Me, and live. Behold, there is a place by Me, and I will put thee in a cleft of a rock, and will cover thee with My hand, while I pass by’ (Exod. xxxiii. 20-23)—so the Lord, in the judgment, will moderate His glory by the presence of His holy angels, and render it endurable by even the best of them

who come up to be received of Him. 'For it is of His *mercy* that we are not consumed.'

Still, we must remember that this is a parable, and that we must take no part of it in a literal sense. 'When the Son of Man shall come in His glory,' we have already seen really signifies, when Divine Truth shall appear in its own brightness—when the clouds of matter and the temporal affairs of earth shall no longer obscure the perception of spiritual truth,—when a man has left this world and come into the light of heaven, so that he is in a position to comprehend fully what is good and what is true, and to know himself, of what quality he is. This is, indeed, what takes place—not at some set time in the distant future, as some believe, when the trumpet shall sound, and all shall awake and arise to a general judgment, after an indefinitely prolonged sleep—but at the death of every man, who is then come unto judgment, each for himself, without delays, without long intervals of mental unconsciousness. Then shall not only Divine Truth itself explore him, but all the *holy angels*, that is, all the truth of the Lord's Divine Good shall be made active, as it were, by the medium of which judgment shall be effected.

These holy angels become such, according to the degree in which they become recipients of the life of truth proceeding from the Lord's Divine Good. But none can immediately become recipients of the influx of Divine Truth. In every case it is received mediately through Heaven; and, in the parable, the Divine Truth itself is accompanied by angels, because Heaven is thus constituted, and through the angelic medium alone is Truth received, by influx.

'And before Him shall be gathered all nations.' In this expression the word 'nations' means those who are in good or evil, as its dual term, 'peoples,' refers to such as are in truth or falsity. All nations being before Him, plainly indicates, therefore, that the good and evil of a man shall be exposed to the light of Divine Truth, and each shall appear as he really is. It is what is described in Hebrews (iv. 12) as the Word of God,

quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Such, indeed, will be Divine Truth, which shall *explore* each one of us, and make manifest all that before was hidden in the depths of our own souls.

In such a light as this shall each stand confessed a sheep or a goat—in general terms, that is, as good or as evil. But the expressions *sheep* and *goats* mean something more than mere good and evil—for while sheep generally mean those who are in *good*, it more particularly refers to such as are in charity, and thence in faith. The greatest of all Christian virtues is *charity*—without charity the others are nothing worth—and such as are in charity, and thence in faith, are the sheep; the good, who shall inherit eternal life. But the *goats* are those who are in *faith*, but *not* in *charity*; who pride themselves on a barren belief; who think they shall be justified by their faith, yet perform not the works of faith; who say ‘Lord, Lord,’ but do not the things which He commands. The goats are the confident sleepers—the self-sufficient Pharisees who boldly knock, and say, ‘Lord, Lord, open unto us’—but to whom He shall reply, ‘Depart from Me; I never knew you!’

‘And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left.’ Such an arrangement, indeed, is the true spiritual arrangement of the good and the evil—such is the correspondential attitude of truth and falsity—and this passage alone would show that no literal sense is intended. He is the Good Shepherd, and He knows His sheep, and is known of them. His sheep hear His voice, and will recognise His call to sit upon His right hand when He comes in His glory. But only such as have been of His fold will be entitled to this position. Nowhere do we read of goats in the flock of Christ. They are the *black* sheep (so to speak) who have only entered the fold by guile or by stealth. They are the wolves in sheep’s clothing, of whom we read in Matt. vii. 15, and of whom the true disciples were bid to beware, ‘Ye shall know them by

their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?'—they are those who have made a profession, but have been altogether without that life of love, that leaven of charity, without which all faith must be barren and dead.

Let us not fall, then, into the common error of supposing that this great and solemn parable represents a realistic scene, to be performed when, in some remote future, all mankind are to be gathered together to receive judgment—when the Lord in person shall sit upon a throne of glory, at once a royal Monarch and a pastoral Shepherd—when all the holy angels shall be present at the judgment of all mankind.

Such a scene has elements of grandeur which strike the imagination, it is true; but the importance of the occasion to every one of us cannot be enhanced by any supposititious circumstances. For then will be the time for each of us, individually, to lie bare and exposed to the searching light of Divine Truth; then shall what was done in a corner be proclaimed from the house-tops; then shall every man be perceived a sheep or a goat—a fit denizen of heaven or of hell. This is the judgment which awaits us all, and the result is in the power of everyone to modify for himself. Let every one of us, then, remember that the Divine Commandments must not only be known but performed—that he must not only believe, but do—that he must not bury his talent in a napkin, but gain other talents therewith—that he feed the hungry, clothe the naked and the stranger, and visit the sick—and that whoso does these things in the fear and love of his Saviour will be rewarded by hearing Him say, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me: come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

## LECTURE XXVII.

### THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

‘Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion : shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold, thy King cometh unto thee ; He is just, and having salvation ; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.’—ZECH. ix. 9.

ALTHOUGH the Old Testament prophecies often speak plainly of the Messiah—His coming, His preaching, His kingdom, His sufferings, and His death—there are few more palpable and verbal fulfilments recorded in the Gospels than of the circumstance referred to in the above passage. It is there proclaimed, upwards of 500 years before Christ was born, that the King of Zion and of Jerusalem, He who should be just and having salvation, ‘should ride triumphant into the holy city upon a colt, the foal of an ass ; a combination of remarkable circumstances and declarations, which was most strikingly fulfilled by subsequent events. And it is worthy of notice that, although it does not always happen that even *three* of the Evangelists concur in recording the same event in the life of our Lord, yet in this case, *all four* of them agree in a circumstantial description of this last entry into Jerusalem ; and the 21st chapter of Matthew, the 11th of Mark, the 19th of Luke, and the 12th of John concur in all the chief particulars of the event, which, having been already announced by prophecy, has thus acquired a most momentous importance.

For this was the crowning event of His active life upon earth. Hitherto He had been working diligently. ‘My Father worked hitherto, and *I* work,’ He had said ; and truly His years of ministry had not been idle or inactive. He had

taught in their synagogues, and by the roadside, upon the lake and upon the mount; He had healed the sick—He had given sight to the blind, and feet to the lame—He had cleansed the lepers—He had raised the dead. He had proved everywhere, and on every occasion, that He was indeed One with authority—that He was endowed with power, not human only: He had spoken as never man spake; He was a Prophet, mighty in word and in deed; and of these things most men were convinced. He had striven with men, and had prevailed where He wished to do so; He had taken to task, and put to shame, the wiser among the Jews, had pointed out their errors, and called upon them to reform their lives, so that they had sought to take Him in His talk, to excite the people against Him, even to kill Him.

All this proved the activity of His life, His energy and determination; it proved also His power. The machinations of His enemies were in vain, until the fulness of time should come. It was in vain they led Him to the brow of a precipice to cast Him down from thence: He passed among them and went His way. His hour was not yet come.

But it was not to be so always. The time of His active life would cease; the time of His passive suffering would begin. The hour had long been foretold by Him to His incredulous disciples, when He should suffer many things from the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. They had given no credence to His mournful presages; but they were none the less true—none the less fully known to, and realized by Him. And now the time was come when He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem (Luke ix. 51).

But this final visit to Jerusalem of one who was going to certain death was not to be the simple journey of an unknown and unhonoured citizen, furtive and unnoticed; but our Lord, in fulfilment of prophecy, and for the completion of His spiritual mission, exercised His power once more, and for the last time, over the fickle populace; and made that triumphant entry,



indicated by Zechariah, and circumstantially described by all the four Evangelists. He had often said, 'My kingdom is not of this world'—and as often had His hearers failed to understand His words. They always looked for some acts—some avowal, which should spread consternation among His enemies, and commence the drama of royalty which they secretly desired, and ardently longed for. It was, doubtless, far from our Blessed Lord's thoughts to have given any false hopes, or to lend any colour whatever to the worldly views of His followers—to lead them for a moment to imagine that any earthly aggrandizement could be of the slightest moment to Him. When, therefore, He had determined to enter Jerusalem as a king might, amid the ascriptions of royalty, and the excited *vivas* of the populace, He still held to His universally expressed, but utterly misunderstood canon—'My kingdom is not of this world.'

But the gross and natural Jews could none of them comprehend the spiritual world in which His kingdom really lay. No explanations to their surd and dull understandings could impress them with the true meaning of His words. He did not repudiate royalty, but He disclaimed an earthly kingdom—He was not come to restore the material beauty and prosperity of Mount Zion, but to illustrate and establish the Beauty of Holiness, and to reign over that spiritual Jerusalem which should be established through the agency of His teaching, His life, His suffering, and His death. He was not to be King of the Jews—but King of kings, and Lord of lords. In this world He was a Servant of servants—to teach us that humility and self-sacrifice which would enable us hereafter, when He should sit in glory and majesty at the right hand of the power on high, to be where He was, and to stand within His presence for ever. But of this they could never arrive at the perception—never (until the teaching after His resurrection) comprehend.

But that which our Lord, in pursuit of His paramount object, and in virtue of the spiritual quality of His ministry did, repre-

sentatively—that which could in no other way be of permanent value and importance—the people attributed to other motives ; measuring the things of the Lord by their own standard, and after their own wishes. To be an earthly king was their ideal—to be a heavenly King was His mission. Everything that He did, and every word that He spoke, had a spiritual and a celestial meaning and object ; for thus He associated earth with heaven, thus He assured an endless kingdom, of which they had no idea. In no other way could He act ; and the merely jubilant ride into Jerusalem, with the symbols of royalty, would have been, indeed, a trifling matter, compared with the great issues that ride symbolized and typified. But the time was not yet come when the Jews could know *this*. Their minds were not, and for a long time would not be, opened to comprehend these things ; but Truth remains for ever, and the time would come when the Hosannas to the imaginary king of Jerusalem would be changed to the cries of ‘Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb ;’ when the shouts of a fickle and blind populace, who hailed the advent of a supposititious king of the Jews, would be superseded by the deep-felt and soul-expressed ascription of ‘Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen’ (Rev. vii.).

Yes, the people now vainly imagined that He who rode, not humbly, but royally, upon an ass’s colt, with the outward symbols of power, was about to assume that attitude which they all desired—was about to exercise that authority with which they all credited Him, and to overthrow the hated yoke of the Romans, under which they had so long been oppressed. The wish was father to the thought, and they thronged out of the city to meet and welcome Him. They themselves afforded by their enthusiasm those very adjuncts which made His progress seem a royal one ; and as they descended the slope of the Mount of Olives, ‘much people that were come to the feast took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet Him. And many spread their garments in the way, and others cut

down branches of trees and strawed them in the way. And they that went before and they that followed cried, saying, Hosanna ! blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord : Hosanna in the Highest !' The excitement spread far and wide that the Deliverer was at hand, and all went out by a common impulse to welcome and receive Him.

And so, indeed, was the Deliverer at hand ; but not in the sense of those who swelled the royal progress—the brief, short-lived earthly triumph, which was but a type of higher things. For those who were within earshot of our Lord as He turned that corner from Bethany, which brought the city of Jerusalem into His view, might have heard a fatal lamentation—a yearning woe—fall from His sacred lips, which would have dashed all their hopes of an earthly rejuvenescence of their beloved city and temple. For Jesus, when He beheld the city, wept over it, saying, ‘ If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation ’ (Luke xix. 41-44). And how completely was this fatal prediction fulfilled in due time, and not many years after, when the Roman conqueror levelled the temple, and exercised a terrible vengeance, as a Divine retribution, upon the faithless city which had refused to recognise the Lord and Giver of Life when He visited it—which had betrayed and murdered the Prince of Peace when He came unto His own and His own received Him not.

Not less, however, was this prediction descriptive of the spiritual condition in which the people of the city would be placed by their wickedness, and by the terrible crime of which they had become collectively guilty. These stones, indeed,

the stones of the goodly temple, were *truths*—the truths of which the Church was built up ; truths which had been outraged and profaned, and were no longer fit to be arranged in a symmetrical and heavenly doctrine, but were to be disjointed and disconnected—to be torn asunder and utterly thrown down ; no longer a goodly edifice of Heaven-inspired teaching, but a corrupt and subverted ruin, which, instead of representing Heaven upon earth, should only cumber the earth with the fragments of unseemly disorder. Not that God's temple could be so destroyed, for the temple, as it then stood, was rather man's than God's—the temple of Herod, rather than the temple of Solomon ; and hence its doom. But the stones of which it was built were yet representatives of truths, which should be hereafter reconstructed in a spiritual manner in the fulness of time, so that the glory of the latter house should greatly exceed the glory of the former.

And so also all that passed in that memorable entry into Jerusalem was representative of the passage of our Lord towards the consummation of His errand—the glorification of His humanity ; just as it was, in a secondary manner, symbolical of the passage of the human soul through the stages of regeneration, and more especially through the later stages of spiritual progress. Like the ancient Jews, the Saviour set out from Jericho to go to Jerusalem. He rode, as kings rode in those days, upon an ass's colt, though He was meek—not in the sense of lowly, or of poor estate—but like those meek who shall inherit the earth, those who abound in charity, and in the good derived therefrom ; or, in the case of our Saviour, as the Representative of Divine love, out of which flows celestial good. He came upon an ass, because He thus symbolized the spiritual principle dominating the rational ; and His thus coming to Mount Zion signifies the reception of Divine love and Divine good into the inmost human heart, when the understanding and the will are in accord, and concur to give them welcome. All the affections from the highest to the lowest—both those that go before and those that follow after—join in a hymn of

praise and cordially sing Hosannas, and offer praises to Him who thus shed abroad His love in their hearts, and filled their whole being with rejoicing and blessing.

And when He had entered the city He went straight to the temple of God, and drove out thence all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, saying, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer.' But the temple of God was the temple of His body, and thus He shadowed forth how He was at that hour engaged, in thrusting forth from His humanity—now approaching to perfection—all those imperfections of nature, all their weaknesses of inheritance which yet clung to it, and which alone prevented it from becoming the Divine-Human fount of salvation to mankind. And when thus cleansed, He could heal the blind and the lame that came to Him there; He could restore the halting soul, He could renew the spiritual sight, and become the Saviour of the lost, the Redeemer of the forfeit and perishing.

Such, in brief, were the spiritual characteristics of the great triumph of His entry into Jerusalem, just before that fearful time of His betrayal and death. The people who sang Hosannas did so because they thought they saw in Him a king who offered a prospect of speedy deliverance from an earthly yoke. How much more would they have done so had they been able to comprehend the deliverance from an infernal yoke which a God was bringing them! They shouted welcome because they saw in Him the fulfilment of their natural desires for a ruler of their own nation, who should lead them to victory against the Roman foe. How would they have shouted could they have known that they should thereby welcome into their own hearts the kingdom of Heaven—the yoke of Christ—and the blessing of a longsuffering and gracious Jehovah!

No wonder indeed that the whole city was moved, and men were fain to ask, 'Who is this?' If once men can be moved to ask such a question, it shows that they have been moved deeply in the springs of their being. The awakened conscience

asks, 'What has done this?' The hearer of strange, and new, and soul-stirring truth asks, 'Who is this, who speaks as never man spake?' The believer who hears and recognises God's voice as something apart from and above the teaching of men asks, 'Who is this that teaches with authority?' And our Lord's entry into Jerusalem caused men to ask one another, '*Who is this?*' So the prophet Isaiah asks, in the 63rd chapter, when he says, 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? and that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength?' For such indeed was He who now came, meek, and riding upon an ass, to His final conquest, his ultimate victory at Jerusalem. 'I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save,' He might have replied,—I who, after one more struggle, shall ascend to My Father, a Mediator between God and man, able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Me. The gates of Jerusalem were open to receive Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth, and not only so, but Jehovah, the Word made flesh! 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty—the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts—He is the King of Glory.' Amen.



## LECTURE XXVIII.

### ‘BEHOLD THE MAN!’

‘Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And (*he*) saith unto them, Behold the Man!’—JOHN xix. 5.

NEVER did it please God to bring good out of evil in a more striking and stupendous manner than in that great Tragedy which is so graphically described in the chapter from which this verse is taken. Never did more discordant elements—more widely different characters—come into play than in the all-important event; an event in which good and evil, each in its kind pre-eminent, were wondrously mingled; all that was evil in it being caused by man, all that was good the gift of God! In that fearful crime, the human race stand conspicuously prominent in the lurid light of the blackest of malefactors; while the Divine Being, who was the object of their fiercest hatred, and their bitterest persecution, showed His infinite forbearance, in passively suffering all that their malice could inflict; and His infinite love in submissively enduring the bitterest humiliations, the vilest insults, without anger and without reproach—in order that thereby He might fulfil all that had been written concerning him—in order that He might accomplish the self-imposed work of man’s redemption—in order that, for their sakes, He might ascend and sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on high—a Reconciler, an Atoner, and a Mediator between God and man.

The narrative given by St. John and the other Evangelists abounds with incidents of absorbing interest, of which the central figure is ever the meek and unoffending Victim, whom

the insane wrath of man was about to sacrifice ; and that terrible and never-to-be-forgotten day was crowded with wondrous events, each of which in their import to us—in their aspect as fulfilments of prophecy, in their fearful load of responsibility on the active performers in the scene—might occupy our attention for a long time.

But of these details there is one, which is only mentioned by St. John, which does not appear to have received the attention it deserves ; one which is inferior to none in importance, though usually overlooked or misconstrued.

The vacillating Pilate, the Roman Governor, a man of no religion, and quite unable to enter into the personal prejudices and animosities of the Jews, was willing, from a sort of lazy good-nature, to have saved Jesus from the machinations of His enemies. Not appreciating the strong feeling manifested by the Jewish accusers, he fancied he could non-suit them when they brought Jesus before him, and required His condemnation. ‘What accusation do you bring against this man?’ he demanded—and when they vaguely accused Him as a malefactor, bringing forward no specific charge, he at once perceived that for envy they had delivered Him ; and he determined that he would himself question the object of this popular outcry. ‘Art thou the King of the Jews?’ Pilate asked, curiously, as though it was some natural phenomenon which did not concern him. Our Lord answered him according to this thought, whereupon Pilate disclaimed all interest in the matter, except mere curiosity. ‘Am I a Jew?’ ‘What can it matter to me whether you claim a kingdom or not?’ ‘What hast thou done?’ ‘My kingdom’ (our Lord answered) ‘is not of this world. I am come to bear witness to the Truth.’ ‘What is Truth?’ then still carelessly demanded the Roman Governor ; but to this most important question, no answer is recorded.

Inconsistently, but still, perhaps, out of good-nature, and wishing to spare Jesus a worse punishment, Pilate ordered Him to be scourged. But Pilate was no Christian. It does not appear that the truths and blessings brought by this

reviled and despised Nazarene had touched either his intellect or his heart. Pilate probably looked upon our Lord as some Quixotic Jew, who had brought upon himself the envy and malice of the elders of Israel by a superiority of teaching, or perhaps by a too stern denunciation of their vices. Although not a pattern of virtue himself, he doubtless had lived long enough among the Jews to perceive the hollowness of their faith, the meanness and narrow-mindedness of the Pharisaical professors; and it is not unlikely that the demeanour of our Lord may have raised in him a faint desire to save Him from the fanatical crowd, who had nothing definite to prefer against Him. Pilate looked with contempt upon all Jews; but we cannot wonder that even he should have conceived some respect for the person of our Lord, and, mingled with it, a certain amount of pity for His critical position. He would willingly have saved Him, if he could have done so without the loss of his own influence and position. He evidently thought at first that he could have done so, and contemptuously set aside the outcries of the people as mere empty noise; but he had not calculated the fierce malevolence of the Jewish crowd, urged on and excited as it was by the Pharisees and rulers. He soon found that he was powerless to stem the tide of their malignity and hatred, and ultimately they obliged him to yield all that they demanded. At this period, however, he probably considered that he might compromise the matter—that, if he let them have their own way to a certain extent, their fury could be abated, and they would at length cool down and be pacified. He therefore allowed the soldiers to do very much as they chose, although he at the same time condemned himself, by announcing to the multitude that he found no fault in Him at all.

But something must be done to appease the tumult, so Pilate ordered Him to be scourged, and gave Him over to the tender mercies of the Roman soldiery. And these blood-thirsty and half-savage men, accustomed to the sight of blood and wounds, not only in lawful or unlawful war, but also in the

demoralizing scenes in the arena of the Colosseum, thought little of cruelly scourging a Jew; but as a vile travesty of the kingship of our Lord, and in coarse and cruel jest, they hit upon the device of a crown of thorns, which pierced His Divine brow, a reed was placed in His passive hand, as the mockery of a sceptre, and a purple robe of the Imperial colour was contemptuously thrown upon His scourged shoulders, and His persecutors scornfully bowed the knee, and addressed Him with grim irony as the *King of the Jews*.

Let us pause a moment to consider this awful, this terrible, this sublime scene. The Lord and Giver of Life—the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe—the Fountain of Love and Wisdom—the King of Kings and Lord of Lords—the Ineffable, the Eternal, the Omniscient, and the Almighty God—in His human form, which He had assumed in love for mankind—sat silent ! scourged, mocked, buffeted, tormented, insulted, and reviled by the lowest, the most brutal, the vilest of His creatures ! With supreme patience, and with Divine dignity, He endured all this : when He was reviled, He reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not ; He was oppressed and He was afflicted ; He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.

Who else could have endured all this, not only in conscious innocence, not only in the knowledge of the black ingratitude involved, but also in the consciousness of Almighty Power ? Will He now pray to His Father, who shall presently give Him more than twelve legions of angels ? ‘ But how, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ? The cup that My Father giveth Me to drink, shall I not drink it ? ’

Only Infinite Love could have sustained Him ! Nothing less could have been sufficient for the mighty strain. For the sake of Love, Infinite Power bowed before infinitesimal weakness ; for the sake of Love, Infinite Goodness permitted Himself to be the sport and jest of the basest and most degraded of human passions ; for the sake of Love, Infinite

Majesty was content to be crowned with thorns, to hold in His hands a mock sceptre, to be clad in a robe of insulting purple ! 'Herein is Love—not that we loved Him, but that He first loved us, and gave Himself for us.'

And when the soldiers had thus wreaked upon Him all the base and pitiful passions which could disfigure humanity, Pilate again came forth, and saith unto the crowds outside, 'Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him.' He still seemed to think that he could override the popular feeling, and doubtless imagined that the sight of the accused, thus scourged and insulted, might wean them from further malice. But, if so, he was grievously mistaken. For when Jesus came forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, their rage only broke forth afresh, and when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him!' Nothing less than His death would satisfy them; their passions were excited to the point that no power could stem them but His blood. Pilate was cowed, and although he still made efforts to prevent the catastrophe up to a certain point, they were useless against the torrent of popular malice and rage.

But at this period it was that that memorable saying was uttered which forms the key-note of this Lecture. We read, 'Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And he saith unto them, *Behold the Man!*' Saith unto them—yes, but who saith unto them, 'Behold the Man'? We read in our Testament, *Pilate* saith unto them; and we are accustomed to understand that it was Pilate who made the announcement. But if we turn to the passage, we shall find that the word *Pilate* is in italics, which means that it is not in the original Greek. If this is the case (as it is), it could not have been Pilate who thus proclaimed their victim, for although Pilate's name is used at the beginning of the verse before, grammatical construction will not allow of the verb 'saith' claiming that name for its nominative case. For we read, 'Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns

and the purple robe. And *He* saith unto them, Behold the Man !' But 'He saith' cannot refer to Pilate. It can only refer to Jesus Himself.

If it had been Pilate who made this exclamation, he would (though unwittingly) have proclaimed a great fact. He would merely have meant to announce that here before them was the *man* whom they accused, and whom he had scourged, though the form of the expression was susceptible of other and larger meanings, bringing to mind the Man Christ Jesus, who the Apostle afterwards declared to be the only Mediator between God and man. But if it was (as it seems to have been) our Lord who thus announced Himself, exclaiming to the assembled people, 'Behold the Man !' then did He proclaim Himself with truth as the Man *par excellence*. For He was *the* Man above all other men—He was the typical Man, the beginning and the ending, the be-all and end-all—the sum and essence of all that constitutes humanity in its highest form—in its most exalted possibilities. It was as though He had exclaimed, 'Behold in Me the Man of men ! Behold in Me the New Adam, the Restorer, the Regenerator of your race—in this suffering and contemned form, recognise the Man-God, who is in a short space to become the God-Man !'

God the Creator, who by the word of His power created the heaven and the earth—He also created man in His own image, and after His own likeness ; and He breathed in his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Thus at his very beginning and origin, man obtained a kinship of form with his Maker. He, the creature, was formed in a mould which the Creator of all things had already chosen for Himself—a form originally, therefore, spiritual, although invested in an earthly body. This, as the most glorious of all sentient forms, He had deigned to impart to His creature, whom He designed to be a receptacle of His own Divine Love and Wisdom in a finite measure, and an intelligent though necessarily finite reflector of His own infinite perfections.

This was God's gift to man, which, if he had preserved



intact, heaven would have remained, as it first was, on earth—and man would have continued in innocence and happiness. But he ill repaid the glorious distinction; and falling away from the perfect condition in which he was created, he deformed the God-like image in himself, blasted the divinely breathed life—and the living soul became a dead spirit. The first Adam fell, and, with his fall, brought a heritage of death and destruction upon all his posterity, who by nature are therefore born in sin. And from this self-inflicted penalty they are incapable of doing anything of themselves to restore themselves to their original condition, from which they have voluntarily fallen. From this state they can only be delivered by the second Adam, greater than the first. For, as the first Adam is a representative of the human race unregenerate, polluted, dead in trespasses and sins, so the *second Adam* is a Representative of the same human race, redeemed from sin, regenerated to holiness, made alive once more, and for ever. ‘For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.’

But to effect the vast work of redemption, to restore fallen man once more to his pristine innocence, was a task which none but a God could conceive—none but a God could put into execution. For, observe, it would not have been enough to restore man to his original condition; what had happened once would happen again. God knows, only too well, that man, left to himself, would soon begin the downward path, under the love of self and the world; and the restriction would have been made in vain, unless with it were some safeguard, which, established once for all, would ever be a support to his weakness—a stimulus to his better nature. And to effect this, the Lord Himself, in His infinite wisdom, determined that no less a step was necessary than that *He* should take upon Himself our nature, and become Himself a man—a man, not like us, finite, imperfect, weak, and sinful—but infinite, perfect, and holy—yet no less, at the same time, humble, and meek, and suffering.

For He who, in the form of God, thought it no robbery to

be equal with God—He made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Himself the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death—even the death of the cross. But He was no less Divine that He set us an example of humility ; He was no less God that He suffered the death of His human, material body ; He was no less the Omnipotent Ruler of Heaven that He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. He was the Word made flesh—the Word, which in the beginning made all things, who was with God, and who *was God*. Although incarnate in a human form, making Himself subject to all the persecutions and malice of those whom His sufferings were benefiting, He was no less God, almighty, eternal, and invisible. God was the soul of that body, which, before His death on the cross, no man could distinguish from his fellow's.

But it behoved Him to be persecuted and afflicted ; it behoved Him to suffer death, that we might enter into life ; it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. And so the infinite Man died on the cross for finite mankind. He became sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

But it was in His capacity as *man*. The Godhead could suffer grief for His erring creatures—the Godhead could strive with them in Love—the Godhead could bear with patience and longsuffering the obduracy and obstinacy of mankind ;—but as *man alone* could He die for them—as man alone could He mediate for them—as man alone could He remit the penalty. For since by *man* came death, by Man came also the resurrection from the dead.

But the *man* in our Lord, always infinite, was becoming perfect. By the resistance of temptation, by the conquest of the powers of darkness, by the victory over evil and sin, He was gradually effecting that great work which He had set

Himself to perform, and whose cost He Himself only knew, the sanctification and the glorification of His humanity, in order that it might be so purified and purged from all touch of earth, and from all the dross of the nature in which He was born in the world, as to be made fit for perfect conjunction with the Divine in Him. For He was a Man of like passions with us, tempted in all points like as we are. And now He was near perfection. Each act of His life, each persecution and suffering, brought Him nearer to the goal to which He was hastening, though the most difficult steps to that end yet remained to be taken. His death on the cross would finish the work. His glorification was at hand. *'Behold the Man!'* He exclaimed, *'the Man whom ye have rejected, and whom with cruel hands ye are about to crucify and slay!'* Behold the Man, who so long has walked in your midst, has healed your sick, raised your dead, preached the Gospel unto you! Behold the Man, whom yet a little while, and ye will behold Him no more for ever, unless, indeed, it shall be yours to see Him crowned with glory, and honour, and majesty, and dominion, and sitting at the right hand of power on high. For He whom ye now see suffering, afflicted, tormented—He whom ye now behold in His extremity of bodily anguish, and of earthly dishonour—He it is who shall hereafter be seen in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to His foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth went a two-edged sword, and His countenance was as the sun shineth in its strength.' Behold the Man! infinite, perfect, glorified, Divine!

This is that Man who died for us, even Jesus Christ, that liveth and was dead, and behold He is alive for evermore. This is He who, although God, yet became man, in order that

He might become the Mediator between God and man, even the Man Jesus Christ, the righteous, the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. This is the Man who burst the bands of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above every name—that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow—of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord*, to the glory of God the Father.

Behold the Man! and let all exclaim with one voice (as did the centurion of old), ‘Truly this *Man* was the Son of God!’

## LECTURE XXIX.

NOT THIS MAN, BUT BARABBAS.

‘Not this man, but Barabbas.’—JOHN xviii. 40.

AMID all the incidents of the great Tragedy, so full of awful scenes, and so teeming with terrible episodes, there are some which appeal to every state of soul, and to every phase of mind—some which carry with them feelings too deep for expression, too pregnant for utterance, of sorrow, of shame, of pity, of remorse. In this great event, all the evil feelings of mankind seem to have met, as it were, in a focus—ingratitude, treachery, folly, cruelty, hatred of good, and thirst for blood ; all these vilenesses seemed to have struggled together, and become immixed in a chaotic mass of seething wickedness in the breasts of that dread representative section of the human race which hounded on the sinless Redeemer of mankind to the place which they had ruthlessly determined should see His death agonies upon the cross.

No meekness in the Victim they were leading, as a lamb to the slaughter ; no remembrance of the blamelessness of His life and conversation ; no softening from His wise teaching, which had compelled their admission that ‘never man spake like this man ;’ no recollection of His yearning love towards them, which would have gathered them as a hen gathers her chicken under her wing ; no heartfelt thankfulness for all the benefits daily conferred upon them by Him who had gone about doing good ; in a word, no motives of past favours or present pity could stand for one moment against the selfish determination to indulge the vilest passions of their unbridled

wickedness in the sacrifice of what they knew in their hearts had no other fault than the silent but intolerable rebuke to their hardened and thankless hearts.

Except the disciples, who all forsook Him and fled, there was but one who had anything like pity. The Roman Governor, Pilate, free from the prejudices which blinded the Jewish mob, was unable to see His crime, and refused to believe Him a malefactor. 'What accusation do you bring?' he asked the people, in the hope that he could soften the rock, or melt their hearts of flint. But accusation they had none but the foregone conclusion that He was a malefactor, whom they wished to kill, and who, therefore, had deserved death. 'Nay, then' (said Pilate), 'take Him, and judge Him according to your law;' still willing to save Him, but in vain. Again, overruled by the resistless and merciless multitude, he was fain to seek escape from the burden imposed upon him by the endeavour to give them an excuse for His release in pursuance of a time-honoured right. 'Ye have a custom that I should release unto you one at the Passover.' (It was a day of grace for one criminal at least.) 'Will ye, therefore, that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried all with one voice, '*Not this man, but Barabbas*. Now Barabbas was a robber.'

Pilate was but one among ten thousand. He did not profess to be a follower of Christ. He was not even one of those to whom Christ came, one of those of his race—his own, who received him not. He was a Roman—not worse than other Romans—perhaps better; for although urged by the blind accusations of the Jews, he courageously declared, 'I find in Him no fault at all.' And although he ultimately weakly succumbed to the popular fury, and gave his countenance to that which they so vehemently desired and demanded, we must remember that as the Roman Governor, he was bound to keep order in his province, and was liable to be called to account by his superiors for the tumult which was becoming so dangerous. He knew not Jesus as the Christ; his eyes had



not been opened to know Him as the Holy One of Israel ; but he saw in Him a just man, whom all his power and authority were vain to protect in the face of the excitement and hatred of a seething populace. He was in his eyes a single individual, whose sacrifice was demanded in the interests of the peace of the province ; and as such, he perhaps acutely, perhaps with political prudence—but yet at least with regret, and with a struggle—sacrificed Him. And our Lord Himself answered him, ‘ Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above : therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin ’ (John xix. 11).

We have spoken of that body of men who cried out ‘ Crucify Him,’ and who drove our Saviour out to Mount Calvary, as a representative section of the human race—and such indeed they were. For they represented all that was selfish, evil, and cruel in our human nature. They represented passions and qualities, which, in their day, and under their circumstances, found free scope, and gave themselves unbridled vent.

We must not suppose that the men of that day were worse than the men of another day ; that what they did would not have been done in any other age, or by any other people. The nature of mankind, originally pure, has fallen to depths of depravity, which the well-disposed and little-tempted have but slight idea of. The *fall* was gradual, but it was complete and perfect. The descent is always easy, and when entered upon, is seldom a half-measure ; the depth is reached too often ; the abyss is sounded with too great facility. And mankind was sunk into that abyss. ‘ The heart ’ (says the Prophet Jeremiah) ‘ is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it ? ’ (Jer. xvii. 9). Certainly not man himself—who does base and mean actions unblushingly, and with a serene countenance ; or who stands proudly by, and contemplates wickedness in others, thanking God that he is not as other men are—for so he deems in his ignorance and pride of heart.

And yet, we repeat, the murderous crowd who killed the

Lord of Light and Glory was representative. For high as are the aspirations, and grand as are the capabilities of mankind for the performance of deeds of self-sacrifice, and charity, and love—so, on the other hand, unlimited are its powers of evil-doing, boundless are the possibilities of its debasements, and unfathomable are the depths to which it may sink in the slough of infamy and guilt. The fallen nature of man embraces every grade of evil, as of good. Left to himself, he must sink, because his nature is inclined to evil : without help from above, he must hopelessly and helplessly drift down the stream of irresistible self-indulgence, and unstemmed desire, to the black ocean of destruction and death. Who is it that maketh us to differ ? It is by the grace of God that we are what we are.

But the natural tendency of every heart is to exclaim, ‘ Not this man, but Barabbas ! ’ To follow Christ is too irksome, too contrary to our inborn nature, our most cherished inclinations. To the evil man, it seems a kind of slavery to be obliged to do that which is good. He ever seeks for what he calls *freedom*—freedom, that is, to follow his own desires and evil instincts, which are contrary to the law of life. The freedom which he desires is really but *license*—the liberty he thinks so precious is but slavery to sin and to evil lusts—and the life which he thinks only worth enjoyment is in reality but death. The works of the flesh have their charms for our nature before it is regenerated, but the end of these things is death. It is not *natural* to us to see the liberty into which we come by obeying the law—the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. Wickedness and error are subtle enslavers, which bind us by heavy penalties to perform their behests, offering us no adequate reward, but only the dissatisfaction and upbraiding of our own hearts, and a death to all that is holy, and good, and that gives true delight to the soul.

Such is the lot of those who choose Barabbas ; but to follow Christ is to secure ultimate peace and joy—a full satisfaction and content which shall never fail us—a sense of happiness

and freedom which shall amply repay all the anxieties and doubts by which it has been purchased—rest to the soul—confidence in the future—hope, the soul's anchor—ever opening and enlarging capacities for living—a true liberty: for if the Son shall make you free, then are ye free indeed.

We are apt to imagine in the pride of our hearts that if we had been called upon to decide between Christ and Barabbas, we should have had no hesitation in our choice. We suppose that these things were done in a dark age, when men were sunk lower in wickedness than ever before or since. And in this, to a certain extent, we are right. Men were then in a state so dark and so fallen, that there was a danger of their total destruction, and hence it was, that Christ Himself came at that juncture to save them. But they were only capable then of what we are now. Human nature, in the general, does not change unless it be in prolonged cycles, to which 1,800 years is but as a watch in the night. That it does change in such long cycles is evident—for man was created innocent, and he is now guilty; he was formed upright, and he is now fallen. Christ's advent in the flesh was to restore him to his pristine innocence and uprightness, but how long a period it would take to bring about this reconstruction we may judge partly by what has been effected in eighteen centuries. How much are we better than they? What are the fruits of Christianity in the human race? Great they are in the individuals composing that race; but how much is the race itself lifted above that of the first century? Do we even see in these days, the self-abnegation—the self-devotion—the self-sacrifice, which characterized the early Christians, the martyrs of the first centuries of Christianity? There is a leaven, doubtless—but does this leaven so leaven the whole lump, that if Christ were to come amongst us in the same guise as He came amongst the Jews, He would escape a similar fate? would that leaven so ferment as to sustain men, as faith sustained men in the circus and at the stake? We know not. Perhaps we cannot tell until it has been tried; but we *do* know that the nature of man in the abstract, remains the

same. We *do* know that there are the same cruelty, bigotry, love of dominion, ignorance, crime, and wretchedness, as there were in the days of our Lord. There is perhaps less faith now, indeed, than there was a few centuries back. Men deny their God and their Saviour more now than they did in the dark Middle Ages.

We are at a phase—arising from mental enfranchisement perhaps—which for a time at least kills faith, and deadens belief. It is a phase only, and a necessary one—the reaction from a long period of mental slavery—a result of an evil, which result must be passed through before the good can spring up. For men's consciences and souls have been enthralled for ages; and all that mediæval devotion was, as we know, tainted with superstition, arising as it did from ignorance, and a spurious feeling brought about by a priestly despotism. But now men's souls are freed from this incubus; and the overstrung mind reacts, and flies backward, like an unstrung bow, in the opposite direction of unbelief and want of faith. This will, in time, adapt itself to truth and righteousness; and the immutable laws of our nature will assert themselves; the gentle and irresistible influences of Christianity will, by degrees, be more and more felt, and individual Christians will make themselves more and more a power in the community, and help more and more, as time goes on, in the reconstruction of the kingdom of Christ upon earth, and in spreading over the world the benefits of the freedom which is in Christ and in the Truth; like the dew from heaven which refreshes and renews every living thing. But to *recall* one's steps—that is the difficulty; and as ages only sufficed for the degeneracy of the human race, so must ages at least be required for that admirable millennium, which some easy souls are looking for from day to day.

If, as some ancient MSS. seem to indicate, Barabbas was also called Jesus, it shows, in a remarkable manner, the choice laid before the Jews. Barabbas was a *robber*, a representative of evil; Christ was the embodiment of all that was pure and

good. The choice lay, therefore, distinctly between evil and good—and they chose evil. It is, perhaps, not wonderful that they should have done so when we see how they had prepared the way for their choice. For this, we must bear in mind, was the Passover, ordained in remembrance of the time when God, by a great stroke of judgment against the oppressors of the Israelites, set them, His oppressed people, free. But the Jews had, by some perversion, made this the occasion for setting free the guilty at the expense of the innocent, and Barabbas, the robber, was allowed to escape, in order that Jesus, the just man, might be condemned to death.

But let us not be the judges—let us remember that, although in these days we are not openly called upon to say whether we will have this Man, or Barabbas—we are yet assured by St. Paul (Heb. vi. 6), that there are still lines of action which men may follow to their own destruction, ‘seeing that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh ; and put Him to open shame.’ If the Jews were guilty, how much greater must be our condemnation under such circumstances !

## LECTURE XXX.

‘COME, SEE THE PLACE WHERE THE LORD LAY.’

‘And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye : for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here : for he is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.’—MATT. xxviii. 5, 6.

WHEN the Sabbath had dawned upon those who were bowed to the earth with the load of the irreparable loss (as it appeared) of Him whom they had expected to be at once the champion and the King of Israel—not one of all those who had been accustomed to follow our Lord, and to hear His teachings, had any hope, or saw any way out of the calamitous cloud which had overshadowed their hopes and expectations. They had trusted (as they said) that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel—not from sin, however, but from the Roman yoke ; and in spite of all our Lord’s speech, plain and implied, they fully believed that Messiah would be an earthly sovereign, who should, like Gideon of old, lead them on to victory and to glory. That idea being so firmly rooted in their minds, all our Lord’s predictions and allusions to death and a resurrection glanced off their minds like hail from a penthouse, and left positively no impression—no remembrance—no faintest hope—no brightening doubt—that when His body should be laid in the tomb, it should yet not be all over—all absolutely ended.

*Not one* of the disciples looked for His resurrection—neither the hardy, faithful Peter, nor the loving John—not even Mary of Magdala, who, being the type of love, purified and refined, might have been supposed to have intuitively perceived more



of the mysteries of the faith. But all these, though they had heard Him repeatedly say, 'The Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men; and they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again' (Matt. xvii. 22)—they nevertheless appear to have been, one and all, totally untouched in their understandings. And though we read they were *very sorry*, their sorrow does not appear to have made them any more susceptible of the dread reality of His announcement, which they had totally forgotten when the critical moment had arrived.

This seems to us very unaccountable—but we must not flatter ourselves that we should have been more appreciative than were those to whom Christ spake in the flesh. To which of us has not Christ spoken? To which of us has He not come? Has He not stood at the door, and knocked, and which of us has opened unto Him? The unbelief and hardness of heart of the best of His disciples ought to teach us a lesson of deep humility; inasmuch as each one of us would probably have been as bad, if not worse, under the same circumstances, than were those, for the most part, *good* men and women who were the companions of His earthly pilgrimage.

But now the day has arrived, and the forebodings of the Master are accomplished—the work of wicked men has been fulfilled—they have crucified the Lord of Life—and those whose active hate imagined that they had once for all settled the question of the Christian faith, and the fate of the Christian's Prophet, had sealed up the tomb and set the watch, lest haply (as they shrewdly suspected), 'the disciples should come by night and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead.' For *these* men evidently remembered the prophecies of our Lord concerning Himself, which the disciples themselves had forgotten—or at least had so entirely mistrusted as to regard them as of none effect.

So they went and made the sepulchre secure, sealing the stone and setting a watch. But what avails the seal and the

watch—the puny efforts of wicked men to hold the Lord of Life in bondage to death! The watchers trembled and became as dead men, when the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. They, unbelievers as they were, could not endure the terrible aspect of the angel of the Lord, whose countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. For their own guilt conjured up their deadly fear, and their own violence exhibited to them the terrors of their conscience reflected in the angelic visage of Him who came as God's messenger, to frustrate the designs and machinations of the enemies of Christ.

What wondrous change was then effected we know not. Another stage in the glorification of the God-Man had been effected. The bruised and wounded body had disappeared—had become a glorious body—all the earthly elements derived from His human mother, all the material accretions of His earthly growth, were then dissipated; and the Divinely-begotten Man only survived the purification effected in the tomb. The risen body, unlike that laid in the sepulchre, could no longer be seen by ordinary mortal eyes, but only by the specially opened spiritual eyes of those purposely so favoured. Nor was the risen body recognisable even by those who had been most familiar with Him before death. Divine Truth, embodied in a human, imperishable form, only awaited final conjunction with Divine Goodness at the Ascension, to complete the grand work of glorification; and a gracious interval was thus afforded in order that the risen Redeemer might yet have an opportunity of visiting His disciples, and confirming their minds in those mysteries which their weak faith did not permit them to appreciate or comprehend, until they had been strengthened and fortified by the Divine and personal influence of Christ.

But the loving despairing women were early at the sepulchre which buried all their hopes. They had no expectation of anything unusual, but simply went, weeping, as we should go

to visit the tomb of a lately lost and dearly loved friend. The account, by St. Luke, of what passed on that momentous occasion is more fully detailed. 'They entered in, and found *not* the body of Jesus ;' for that body was not to remain a denizen of the tomb. 'Thou shalt not suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.' But, instead thereof, were two men in shining garments, who addressed them gently and kindly. To the women their countenances were not as lightning—they fell not to the ground, as dead, at the sight of those heavenly visitants who addressed them as friends, saying, 'Fear not *ye*: for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified. Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Remember how He spake unto you while He was yet in Galilee. *Then* remembered they His words.'

*'He is risen !'* Three words—of what mighty importance. Once only before were three words uttered of equal importance, when the angels announced, '*Christ is born*. And the two events thus briefly chronicled were supplementary the one to the other—the beginning and the end—the Alpha and the Omega of that scheme of Redemption, which in the far-seeing Providence of God had for ages been foreseen. For it behoved Him to be in all things like unto His brethren—and, indeed, as He became like unto them in His birth into the world, so may they become like unto Him in their resurrection from the dead. For in Him are all made alive.

'He is risen, as He said'—His own resurrection was fulfilled according to His own prediction—and how could it be otherwise? He could lay down His life, and He could take it up again. And His prophecy concerning His own resurrection is an earnest of the truth of His promise concerning the resurrection of all those who put their trust in Him. For He has said, 'I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.' And thus, in His resurrection we are partakers, and in that He is risen are we assured that in like manner we shall rise from death, and live

again for ever—the new—the perfect—and the glorious life, which is Heaven.

But before our Lord rose from the dead, He suffered many things. To have descended from His glory, and to have taken upon Him the nature of His creatures, weak and imperfect as He knew them to be, must have been a wonderful act of condescension on His part; an act, that is, of self-negation, of self-devotion, of self-sacrifice. None knew better than He, to how great an extent; none better than He knew all it implied, all its bitter consequences to Himself; none so well as He knew all the vast important interests it entailed upon those for whose benefit it was to be performed. The pains and difficulties, the penalties and sacrifices, were willingly undertaken in view of the advantages which would accrue to fallen man—and thus God *sacrificed Himself* for us, in the literal sense of the term. And having undertaken the cure of man's sin, and the restoration of His race to a position of security and happiness—no risk was too great or too appalling for Him who is *love* itself. 'For herein is love—not that we loved Him, but that He loved us, and gave Himself for us.' And, in effect, the whole of Christ's life on earth was one continued struggle with temptation, which was the stronger and the more fiery in proportion as His nature was the more holy and the more spotless than ours. No mere *man* can ever appreciate the sufferings of the Divine man. No mere *man* can ever realize the depths into which the soul of our Lord voluntarily descended to aid His fallen creatures—or the tenacity of purpose, the strength of will, which upheld Him in His battle with the powers of darkness for the salvation of the human race. We are generally content with platitudes and truisms in our estimate of the Divine work, and do not trouble ourselves to probe into the fathomless ocean of the Divine love, which alone could have carried Him through His self-appointed task. But although the finite cannot estimate the infinite, nevertheless we can, if we will, discover that it is fathomless, and become ourselves lost in wonder, in gratitude,

and in love for the boon which comes to us with the blessed words, ‘The Lord is risen indeed.’

And the inquiry will undoubtedly elicit the great central fact that our Lord could never have given salvation to mankind without undergoing much unwonted distress, perplexity and suffering. Not lapped in luxury, like the kings of earth, but cradled in a manger, and not having where to lay His head—He renounced all the good which this world afforded, in order to hold to it by as light an attachment as possible, and to show that all its glitter and pomp is a mere vain shadow, not worthy to be counted, in comparison of the glory which shall follow, any more than its *duration* is worthy to be esteemed in comparison with the eternal life hereafter.

It was, then, by *suffering* that He accomplished that great object of His earthly existence, His glorification. It was by endurance that He consummated His end—the end that was a necessity, not only for the fulfilment of the task He had set Himself, but the necessary grand result accruing therefrom—the salvation of man. If He had faltered, man would have been lost; but His steadfastness in the face of overwhelming difficulties and crushing agonies, was the healing of the nations; without His cross He would not have won His crown; nothing short of endurance to the end could have perfected the work—and *we* have but a dim perception of the incalculable results which *we* derive from His unflinching determination, His unswerving, unabating, unshrinking constancy.

But if *we* are to be partakers of His resurrection, we must in all things follow His example, and none the less in this particular, that we be constant, patient, enduring to the end. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. *We* also must take up our cross and follow Him. *We* also must learn that having put our hand to the plough there is no looking back. The benefits and privileges of membership with Him are not to be purchased by an indolent acquiescence in His commands—a mere theoretical belief in His precepts—or a simple and careless lip-service, while the heart is afar off and untouched.

‘He is not here : for He is *risen*, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.’ He is not here in the tomb—no longer is He in the place of humiliation and death—all that has passed away, and instead thereof He is at the right hand of the Majesty on High. He is not here—no longer is He *in* the world, as *of* it ; but if we seek Him, we must seek Him in the spiritual way He has appointed, and by the means which alone lead to that glorious kingdom where He ever liveth to make intercession for us. ‘Come, see the place where the Lord lay ;’ look into His Word, read and meditate upon His sufferings endured, His temptations overcome, His death finished, His redemption perfected : all *that* is over—He is not here—He is not as He once lay, in humiliation and in self-abasement ; but He is *risen*, as he said—risen to life, risen to power, risen to reap the fruit in our hearts, of all that He has borne of sorrow and of grief, of weakness and of pain.

And has He risen in vain ? We may question our own hearts, and discover whether His rising has marked an era in our own regeneration. For if He has risen in our hearts, then has *His* resurrection become *our* life ; and our souls are ever picturing, as it were, His resurrection in our new birth. For to us He should be ever rising, as our hearts should ever be surmounting the slough of sin and wickedness in which we are by nature immersed, and as the guiding stars of good and truth rise higher above our spiritual horizon, to cast their Divine beams across the upward pathway of our aspiring souls. Happy for us if it is so—and happy for every one who can thus say from his inmost heart, ‘The Lord is risen indeed.’



## LECTURE XXXI.

### THE UNBELIEF OF THOMAS.

‘Then said He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side : and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God.’—JOHN xx. 27, 28.

How great must have been the surprise and disappointment of the disciples, when they saw the meshes of hatred and malice closing around their Lord—when they saw Him seized, and carried off by rough Roman soldiers to the Judgment-hall—when they saw Him passed over from the unprincipled Pilate to the unscrupulous Herod ; and how great their despair when they found He was really condemned to die the death of a felon, upon the cross of ignominy and disgrace ; their utter helplessness, when they saw this fate consummated, and the lifeless body of their dear Master taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb ! Then it was all over ! It had come to this ! ‘We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel ;’ but alas ! He is no more. He, like other men, is dead ! and before His time ; no long life of usefulness and of ever-increasing influence and power—culminating in triumph over His enemies—and kingly glory and dominion ; but, instead thereof, a brief and troublous career, ending in premature and disgraceful death ; His enemies have triumphed over Him, and Israel is not redeemed !

Such must have been the feelings and thoughts of the disciples on that dreary and utterly dark day which succeeded the Saviour’s consummation of His work on earth, when He bowed His head and said, ‘It is finished.’ For although the

disciples had been called by the Lord Himself, and had received from Him a measure of faith and love—although they had accompanied Him in all His ministrations—had seen all His wondrous works—had heard all His teachings—had been instructed in the hidden meanings of His parables—and had received from His own mouth special prophetic intimations of His ultimate fate; yet, in spite of all this, they clung tenaciously to the preconceived views they had always entertained with regard to His mission. For the disciples were, after all, Jews, and the Jews had interpreted the prophecies in their own way, and according to their own external nature, and they looked for a Messiah who would restore them to *material* prosperity, and bring back the glory of David and Solomon once more to Mount Zion.

In vain did He 'show to His disciples how that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and Scribes, and be *killed*, and be raised again the third day' (Matt. xvi. 21). Such plain statements as these seemed to have no effect upon their belief—even this did not penetrate through the thick coat of prejudice and obstinacy which covered them, nor did it move them one *iota* from the belief to which they were naturally inclined.

This strange obstinacy of the disciples illustrate forcibly the condition of the Jewish nation at the time of the appearance of Christ. If these men, who had been specially called to be disciples by the Lord Himself, never swerved from their previous convictions of the temporal mission of the Messiah—in a word, never lost their own personal and ingrained prejudices respecting Him, which they shared with the rest of their nation—what wonder, then, that the rest of the Jews were utterly unbelieving, utterly blind!

The wonder indeed is, that, considering the state of the world at the time of His coming in the flesh—considering how entirely His kingdom was a spiritual and not a temporal kingdom—that He found so many to hear Him, so many to receive His doctrines, and to leaven the world with that truth

which He came to promulgate. Had it not been, indeed, for His foreseeing mercy, in sending one who should prepare the way before Him, to preach repentance, and the near approach of the Kingdom of God, no soul would have been willing to receive Him ; the Son of Man must have come in vain, and mankind, instead of goodwill and peace, must have drawn upon themselves an awful and an irremediable curse.

But when at last the blow fell, and what seemed a hopeless, cureless death, had ended all the golden hopes of the disciples, wonder, surprise, incredulity, and bitter disappointment seized them. He was dead, like any other man ;—and to rise from the dead stood not within the compass of their hopes, expectation, or belief. True, they had heard Him say that He would rise again the third day, but the cheering intimation had taken no hold upon their minds, found no place of faith in which it could lie and germinate, left no tangible impression upon their hearts ; so that when the glorious fact was accomplished, and they were assured by angels that it was so, ‘ their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not ’ (Luke xxiv. 11).

It must be patent to anyone who reads the Gospel with ordinary care, that the intercourse of our Lord with His disciples after His resurrection was of a totally different kind from His ordinary intercourse with them before His crucifixion. Of course, to any reflecting mind, this would not be by any means surprising ; and on consideration, it could hardly be expected by anyone that His death (precisely identical in its nature with that death to which we are all subject) could make no difference in His physical condition, any more than such an idea could be predicated of any one of us. When Christ died, His relations to the natural world must necessarily have been changed, just as the relations of any one of us must necessarily be changed by the article of death. Our spirits then leave our bodies, which return to the elements ; while our souls, clad in a substantial spiritual body, become denizens of another sphere. The change with us has been the casting off

of the outer husk, and the emancipation of the spirit, so that it no longer occupies a place in the *natural world*.

But our blessed Lord, after He had bowed His head upon the cross, and was laid in the tomb, was seen alive by many of His disciples, and on various occasions. He ate and drank with them—He showed them His hands, and His feet, and His side—He talked with them,—and He finally ascended up to heaven in their presence. An inattentive reader might gather from a hasty perusal of these extraordinary narratives, that He acted in all these things after His resurrection as He did before it—that death to Him had made no difference. But far otherwise will it be with one who attentively peruses the sacred narrative—who brings a careful and intelligent study to bear upon the heavenly mysteries.

In fact those who look upon the manifestations of our Saviour after His resurrection as similar in their character to the ordinary intercourse He held with His disciples before His death, can only do so by bringing their natural mind to the consideration of spiritual things—by measuring spiritual things with a natural and earthly standard; and error and confusion are the inevitable result. No one for a moment doubts that our Saviour really died—that His death was even more complete and perfect than the death of Lazarus. In Acts ii., the Apostle Peter, commenting upon Psalm xvi. 8, says, ‘For David speaketh concerning Him, Because Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell’ (or hades),—implying that with the complete death of His body, His soul descended into the *world of spirits*. Not so was it with the widow’s son or the ruler’s daughter—not so was it with Lazarus; they had not seen the secrets of the prison-house—they were recalled to life ere the silver cord was totally loosed—they returned to life and the things of earth in all respects as they were before. Their restored bodies inherited mortality; in them death was only temporarily delayed, not conquered. But it was otherwise with our Lord.

When the first loving visitors, very early in the morning, upon the first day of the week, came to the sepulchre, ‘they

entered in and found not the body of Jesus : and the shining ones who were there said unto them, 'Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.' His body was not there. 'Come, see the place where the Lord *lay*.' Not only was His spirit risen, as will be the case with every one of us, but His body was no longer there—for why? 'Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption!' David is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us to this day ; he, being but man, like all other men saw corruption—but it was not meet that the Holy One should see corruption. He, the Divine, who had condescended to take upon Him a human body, born of flesh, rested not until He had made that body Divine also, and by submitting to temptation, by overcoming sin, by dying for us on the cross, He, by all the stages of His tempted, suffering, and blameless life, perfected the Human in Him, so that it became one with the Divine ; and in His glorified Divine-Human body, He arose from the dead, and ascended up *where He was before*.

How this glorification took place we know not. We saw the wounded and mangled body of the Saviour, buffeted, scourged, His brow torn with sharp thorns, His hands and His feet rudely pierced with iron nails, and His side gashed with a soldier's spear ; we see this mutilated, and probably emaciated, body laid lovingly in the tomb, and on the third day we see it rise a glorified body—perfect, Divine ! What wondrous mystery was then consummated, when, as St. Matthew tells us, 'Behold, there was a great earthquake : for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men' (xxviii. 2-4). Then was a mighty and a Divine work accomplished, incomprehensible in its nature to man, but of which he reaps the eternal benefit ; and from that moment God was united with man by a blessed bond—indissoluble, eternal, and Divine.

And the angel of the Lord, whose aspect was so terrible to the

unbelieving keepers, was gentle to the loving inquirers who came to weep over their Lord, and said unto them, 'Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay' (Matt. xxviii. 5, 6).

We see, then, that the body in which our Lord arose from the dead, was not like the resurrection body of the human race in general. His earthly body saw no corruption, as will ours; for, though born of a human mother, His paternity was Divine. Nor was the body with which He ascended the same as that which was laid in the tomb—but it underwent a glorious and mysterious change; that which was natural in it, became spiritual—that which was weak in it, became the perfection of strength—that which was uncomely in it, became the beauty of holiness—that which was human in it, became celestial and Divine.

But the disciples still withheld their belief. They required a great deal more evidence than that which was afforded by the women who related that they had seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive! 'Idle tales! Did we not see Him nailed on the cross? Did we not see Him (from afar off, it is true) bow His head upon His breast, and give up the ghost? Did we not see blood and water gush out when the soldiers pierced His side? And did we not wind Him in linen clothes, with spices, and lay Him in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, upon the mouth of which a great stone was laid? Was not the stone sealed, and the watch set? And how tell you us that He is risen, and that He is still alive?'

Such was probably the excited questioning and debate they held one with another, when they heard the story told by the women. O ye of little faith! They believed not Moses and the Prophets—they believed not the Lord Himself. Neither could they believe, without irrefragable proof, though He rose from the dead!

In considering our Lord's various manifestations of Himself to the disciples and brethren *after* His resurrection, we must



entirely divest our minds of the idea of natural appearances. The risen Saviour was no longer a denizen of this sphere ; He was no longer a mortal man, as before. He had ceased to walk among men. He had ceased to be seen of all, as hitherto. He had been dead, and, though He was risen again, it was not to the life of earth ; with that He had finally ended. 'It is finished !' He had exclaimed, with His last breath—and that expression might be with truth applied to His earthly course. That was never to be resumed. He had descended into Hades—it now only remained for Him to ascend up into Heaven. But before this final resumption of eternal and omnipotent power, He vouchsafed to hold spiritual communion with His unbelieving disciples, to cure their otherwise unconquerable doubts, to convince His incredulous followers that He had truly risen from the dead—and to give them ocular demonstration of His ascension into heaven. Without this the world would never have believed—and, in pity for us, He condescended to unlock their surd understandings, and to open their spiritual sight. And lo, *their eyes were opened*, and they saw Him—by the spirit, and according to the laws of spirit.

To the general multitude, therefore, who had been wont to press upon our Lord, to hear His teaching, and to bring their sick to be healed of Him—He was as one dead. Never more would they see the good Physician carrying the blessings of sight and hearing, and of cure from all manner of diseases—never more would they hear from Him words of wisdom and life, which had made some of them say, 'Never man spake like this man.' All this was over for them. They had denied the Holy One, and the Just—and had killed the Prince of Life ; and His bodily presence would never more bless their sight. But for those whom He would still make the depositories of His Holy Truth, there was yet a way of communication open to Him, even before He ascended to His Father—and this way was, to open their spiritual sight, so that He could be seen of them—but *according to their varied capacities of spiritual perception.*

But in every instance in which He is recorded as having been seen, after His resurrection, the occurrence was one which was out of the range of the natural world, and must be referred entirely to the spiritual world. Our Saviour was no longer in a material body—He was a Spirit; He could no longer be seen by the natural mortal eye—but only by the spiritual eye, which must be opened to perceive Him. Nor is this circumstance by any means an unprecedented one in Scripture. The spiritual sight must always have been opened to perceive spiritual things—and he who saw the burning bush on Horeb—he who saw the angel of the Lord sitting under an oak in Ophrah—he who saw, and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha—these, and numberless others, saw these things with the eyes of the spirit; in each case there was a special opening of the eyes to perceive what was otherwise hidden. In the last instance, the young man perceived not the wonderful sight before Elisha had said, ‘Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes that he may see’ (2 Kings vi. 17). And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw.

Similarly, when Mary stood without at the sepulchre, weeping—and, on looking in, she seeth two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain, her spiritual sight must have been opened to perceive what would otherwise not have been perceptible to the gross natural vision. And so also all those wonderful events, of which this supernatural sight was the harbinger and concomitant, were alike of a spiritual and supernatural character.

Every apparition of our Lord, after His resurrection, was of this kind, and was accompanied by circumstances of a remarkable and striking character, which prove incontestably (if proof were necessary) that these post-resurrectionary scenes were events which belonged to the spiritual world; they were, in fact, spiritual scenes, which, for wise purposes, the disciples were permitted to share in, and to behold in virtue of a special illumination.

But, in the spiritual world, neither time nor place rule, as here—in that world, *state* is what governs all circumstances and transactions—*state* is what is reflected in all appearances and surroundings. A certain spiritual state is necessary to the reception of spiritual truth—and the degree of spiritual light received is regulated by the spiritual state, and by the perfection or imperfection of the various qualities which make up that state. For spirit is not, like matter, hard and inflexible, retaining the same form from day to day, from month to month, from year to year; but spirit is something ever changing, mobile, and plastic, which accommodates itself to all the progressive stages of spiritual and celestial perfection, and is therefore representative and reflective, and ever in unison with our existing state; far more adaptive, therefore—far more perfect—than hard, unyielding matter.

It is worthy of remark that the women, representative of the affections and will, were the first to arrive at the sepulchre; and the first person to whom our Lord made Himself known was Mary Magdalene, the type of Love—love, purified and refined. At early dawn she was there, loving, but hopeless. She knew her Saviour as the human personification of Love, but she knew Him not as He had now become. Timidly gazing at the sepulchre, she sees the stone rolled away and the vault empty; and carrying the news to the disciples, they hasten to see what it can mean. Then did that other disciple outrun Peter—and thus was *Love* again first at the sepulchre, having outstripped *Faith* in the race; and the disciple whom Jesus *loved*, stood, where just before had stood the repentant and forgiven woman. Love first, and then faith, arrived at the sepulchre.

Not, like Lazarus, had the Lord risen, as He lay down, bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and His head bound about with a napkin; but the linen clothes, cast off with the material body, lay thrown aside, removed by no mortal hands—and left behind, unneeded by the resurrection body. But none, as yet, understood the signification of what they saw—

but believing that, with His body, their last ray of hope had departed, they went to their own homes. Only *Mary* stood without, at the sepulchre, weeping. And as she wept, her spiritual sight was opened, and she saw two shining ones, who asked her why she wept; and as she replied, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him,' Jesus Himself stood before her. Her soul, in its inmost affection, was turned towards her Lord, and then she turned herself to His presence. But she knew Him not—not though every feature was stamped indelibly on her heart—for now He appeals, not to her mortal eyes, but to her spiritual state.

She knew Him not as her risen Redeemer; she had not yet realized Him as the Resurrection and the Life; and so she knew Him not. But when He addressed her by her name, 'Mary,' as one who knew her inmost heart, her spiritual recognition was awakened, and she turned herself to Him and said, 'Rabboni, Master!'

Here again we have an illustration of the principle that spiritual sight and action are related to state. When Mary would have fallen at His feet and kissed them, He said, 'Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father.' But why not touch Him? Why was the loving Mary forbidden to touch Him, while the incredulous Thomas, who had said, 'Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe'—was invited to handle Him to his heart's content and his unbelief's satisfaction? The answer is, Because *she was* the loving Mary, and because *he was* the incredulous Thomas. To each did our Lord appear according to their *state*. Not until His ascension to His Father, was the Divine *Truth*, perfected by the resurrection, fully united with the Divine *Good*, perfected at the ascension. It was His *Love* that Mary loved. She was one who, in her intense *love* to the Lord, had reached the celestial state of regeneration, and for whom conjunction with the Lord required that He should not

only be Divine Truth, but also Divine Love. Until He had ascended to His Father, she could not obtain conjunction with the Father, who is *Love*, but only with the Master, who is *Truth*. Mary saw no prints of nails in His hands and in His feet—she saw no wound in His side—she was far above that, as her faith and her love exceeded the faith and the love of Thomas.

Nor were the other disciples (for the most part), less exacting than Thomas, in their demands for tangible *proofs* of our blessed Lord's identity. For we read that again He afforded proof of the non-materiality of His resurrection body, by appearing in the midst of them when the doors were shut, just as, on a subsequent occasion, He vanished out of their sight, after breaking bread—or as it is in the margin, He 'ceased to be seen of them'—*i.e.*, when their spiritual sight was once more closed. On the occasion first alluded to, He saluted them, saying 'Peace be with you;' and when He had so said, He *showed* them His hands and His side. The disciples, we are told, just before, as yet knew not the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead; and as this happened on the evening of the resurrection day, they had hardly had time to digest the wonderful story already told them by Mary Magdalene—they were still in the darkness of ignorance; and although we are not told that they demanded such ocular demonstration, our Lord accommodated Himself to their benighted condition, and showed them His hands and His side—indicated to them in a more or less pointed manner, according to their various states of doubt and belief, these marks by which their faith might be strengthened.

It was probably rather a symbolical action, indicative of the resurrection of the crucified One, than a tangible testimony, made necessary by unbelief. They did not demand to feel the hands and feet, or to thrust their hands into His side; but all were satisfied, and all were rejoiced. 'Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.' The night of mourning was ended, and the dawn of rejoicing had appeared.

But the arch-doubter, Thomas, was not with them when Jesus came. His mental constitution was peculiar; and although he was not absolutely an unbeliever, he required more *tangible* proof than any of the others. None of the disciples *looked* for His rising—none believed at first—not even the loving Mary; and it was only by degrees that they were persuaded—some easily—others with more difficulty: and His manifestation to them was made successively, according to their states. To Mary, first—then, to the two disciples going to Emmaus—next, to all of them (*except* Thomas) as they were assembled with closed doors—and lastly, to Thomas also. Thomas would be convinced if he had sufficient sensible evidence—even of the most external kind; he must *touch, feel, and handle*, or he could not believe. Others had been satisfied with seeing, but Thomas must feel. He was a degree behind the rest, but only a degree. It was eight days that he remained in this doubting state, unmoved by the testimony of all his brethren, and firmly determined to resist all conviction, until his own tests were applied.

At length Christ gave him his opportunity. Once more he appeared to them, when the doors were shut, and once more he saluted them with ‘Peace be with you.’ And Thomas was also with them. We do not read that he still challenged his proofs. Awed, doubtless, by his Lord’s appearance, he would scarcely have ventured to do so, in such a presence. But his Master knew his thoughts—He knew the low degree of faith which was in His disciple, and he graciously accommodated himself to his *state*. Then said He to Thomas, ‘Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless, but believing!’ We know not if Thomas accepted our Lord’s invitation, or whether this appeal touched his heart and awakened his faith; but the effect was immediate and complete, and Thomas, moved in his inmost soul, exclaimed, ‘My Lord and my God!’ To him, up to this time, our blessed Lord had only been the crucified man—in his mind he still regarded Him



as bearing in His body the spear-wound, and in His hands, the print of the nails. As he demanded to *see* Him—he *saw* Him—it was the highest his state could arrive at ; but when he had seen Him, his faith received an impulse, and he heartily—and perhaps penitently—acknowledged Him both Lord and God.

Jesus saith unto him, ‘Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have *not* seen, and *yet* have believed.’ For true faith is the evidence of things *not* seen ; the faith by which Abraham and Isaac and Jacob inherited the promises. We cannot see His hands and His side, but we may feel His truth in our hearts. We may read His words of justice and of peace—of mercy and of unselfishness—of wisdom and of love ; and we may, by them, elevate our hearts to the acknowledgment of His Divine goodness and truth, and of our own dependence upon Him, and our need of His Holy Spirit ; and we, who have not seen Him, believe.

And if we thus believe, we may follow His example in our lives—we may aspire to be like-minded with Him—and to be perfect, even as He is perfect ; and we shall succeed, in proportion to our faith and our trust in Him. But it will not be by regarding His hands and His feet—His bleeding body, or His limbs drooping in death : it will be by the acknowledgment of Him, at the right hand of power—able and willing to succour the tempted, and to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him ; it will be by knowing Him as our Lord and our God, whose sons we may be, if we suffer ourselves to be led by His Spirit ; it will be by feeling in our inmost heart that He is our Father, and that we are His children ; and if children then heirs—heirs, according to the hope of eternal life which we have in Him.

## LECTURE XXXII.

‘LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS.’

‘And lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.’—  
MATT. xxviii. 20.

WHEN our Lord had established in the minds of His disciples the fact of His resurrection from the dead, it was not unlikely that there was a revulsion of feeling, which led them to estimate much more justly the precise character of the man who had been their companion and friend, no less than their teacher and mentor, during the past few years. They were then enabled to bring back to their recollection all that He had said concerning Himself and His earthly destinies—and not only to bring it back to their remembrance, but to form some degree of just appreciation of the bearing of these prophetic declarations upon their own part in those destinies. They doubtless began, at last, to perceive how greatly they had mistaken Him and His mission, and the glamour of a preconceived mundane splendour, and material sceptre, began to fade before the true perception of His spiritual authority and Divine kingship ; so that they, for the first time, really believed on Him with a saving faith, and a real and firm trust. Had He never risen, or rather, had He never appeared to them after His resurrection, this change in their feelings could never have taken place ; and that germ of faith which was to spread like the branches of a great tree, under which the Christian Church might rest, would never have been realized ; and without miraculous interposition (as in the case of St. Paul), the little band of followers would probably have been scattered

to the wind, with no bond of future unity, which could render them of any avail as missionaries of the religion of Christ.

But the extraordinary and unparalleled events of the Sabbath succeeding the Crucifixion, as well as those which appear to have followed at intervals before the final Ascension upon the Mount of Olives, so strongly influenced the minds of those who shared in those spiritual scenes, that henceforth they were *new men*; no longer walking in the darkness of unbelief, or groping, like blind men, in a maze of doubt and obscurity; but enfranchised and enlightened with something like a measure of the spiritual insight promised by the advent of the Comforter. The tangled skein became suddenly unravelled—the hitherto missed clue was discovered—and they were now able to piece together the hitherto unmeaning and incomprehensible phases of our Lord's history, and present to their minds a connected and a sober view of their relation to one another, and to that consummation which had just been achieved, no less than to their bearing upon their own interest in the Life and Death of the Lord. For when our Lord said, as in the concluding verses of this Gospel, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,' it becomes evident that those who were thus commissioned and set apart to teach the world, must have had a sufficient comprehension of the truths they were thus called upon to teach. And when He further uttered the memorable words, 'And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,' the disciples must have drunk in the words with their understanding and their hearts, and in a far different manner from that in which they had been wont to hear the utterances of our Lord concerning Himself; utterances which, until now, had found no responsive echo within their own breasts, and could only be brought back to their remembrance by the reminders of angels, after the most terrible events in the history of the world had corroborated their truth.

But now they were in earnest ; for now they were assured by incontestable evidence, that He who had risen from the dead was really the Son of God, come to deliver from worse than a Roman yoke ; and while they felt a new strength, and an unwonted firmness in the support of His cause before all the world, they also must have appreciated the difficulties which lay before them, in an unresponsive and unsympathizing people, who would not listen to the preaching of Him whom they had crucified and slain.

The words, therefore, with which our Lord concludes His charge to His disciples must have had a singularly cheering effect upon their minds. For without them they would have felt themselves to be upon a sea of doubt, and embarked upon an impossible enterprise. The world, they knew, was not prepared to accept the risen Saviour, nor, indeed, to believe in His resurrection. The people who had slain the Redeemer, had also pointed to their wicked power in prevailing over Him, as positive proof of the insignificance of their victim ; and such men would not easily be won over to look upon Him whom they had pierced, and to regard Him as their Saviour and their God. But with the disciples it was different. They, indeed, did believe in His resurrection, and with that display of Divine power, they understood that its Author was no mere weak man, but one who had power over death ; and if so, one who also had power over life—power over men's minds—and could bend them to His pleasure. And for such an one to depart, leaving with them the assurance, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world,' was like a spiritual tonic, nerving them to every endeavour, and bracing them against every difficulty, supporting them in every struggle of life, and tranquilizing them under every terror of death.

But the words in question were not solely intended for the disciples who assembled round the risen Saviour on Olivet. They are among the most cherished sayings which His disciples in all ages may appropriate to themselves, as truly as if they had seen Him in the flesh. As our Lord said to Thomas,

'Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' And we, who have not seen our Lord with our bodily eyes, may none the less look to Him with the spiritual sight, and remember that He is not far from every one of us, that His presence accompanies us always, and in proportion to our trust in Him ; and that so long as we fail not in our faith in Him, He will not fail to be with us alway, even to the end of the world. Over and over again had He made the same promise ; to Jacob at Bethel, in the dream, when he saw the ladder which reached from earth to heaven ; unto Joshua, by the mouth of Moses, before his death on Mount Nebo ; and again to himself, when he was appointed the leader of the hosts of Israel in Moses' stead. David left the promise as a legacy to Solomon ; and Solomon, at the dedication of the Temple, appropriated it as an unfailing source of comfort and of trust. Nor was the great Apostle unmindful of it, reminding the Hebrews that God had said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' So that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper ; I will not fear what man can do unto me.'

And if all these were so firmly persuaded that God was able and willing to keep the promise which He had made to them, what reason is there that the faith of these times should fail ? On the other hand, we have to remember that, in these parting words, our Lord ratified the promise of the Old Testament, in which He spoke as the great Jehovah, who was leading His people Israel in paths which they knew not. And the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the same God as the Jesus of the New Covenant, only He is more near to man, more ready to feel for our infirmities, more near to aid us in trial, more prompt to make intercession for us—inasmuch as He is a High Priest that is passed into the heavens, a High Priest who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

If the presence of the Lord with us was always equally apparent, there would not, perhaps, be the need of that continued exercise of faith which we know to be the case in the

experience of each one of us. But that presence, although it is constant and continual, is not always felt, and we are all too ready to imagine that it is withdrawn. We ourselves seek to separate ourselves from God, and then complain that He is not with us. But although His presence is really with us in proportion as we are seeking to do that which He enjoins, He never *really* withdraws Himself from any one of us. As long as we find pleasure and delight in following in the steps marked out for us by conscience and duty, we feel but little difficulty in recognising the accompanying presence of the Divine influence. It comes to us as a strengthening and supporting auxiliary, powerful in aiding and stimulating the desire we feel to live according to the dictates of the Gospel; and so long as we possess it, we cannot fail to possess that internal delight which attends the conscientious performance of the duties laid upon us by the Divine law.

And so indeed, as is the universal experience of all who endeavour to the best of their ability to walk in these footsteps, it becomes abundantly evident, that such an endeavour carries with it all that joy and peace of heart which is derived from the accompanying presence of the Lord in the soul—a presence which alone constitutes heaven. But that presence cannot coincide with an opposite line of conduct. Not that God thus withdraws Himself from us—such a withdrawal would be fatal to us. But we no longer *FEEL* Him within us—we are no longer conscious of the pleasure, the peace, the happiness of content which that presence brings, when it is in harmony with our own inmost feelings. There is a discord felt—a contrariety—an uneasiness—which leads us to the conclusion, and very justly, that the presence of God does not lend us its countenance—gives no stamp of approval to what we ourselves, in our inmost hearts, also disapprove.

But the Psalmist well knew that the presence of the Lord was always with us, even when we least desired it, inasmuch as we were pursuing a course which we knew would not be pleasing to Him. ‘Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or



whither shall I flee from Thy presence?' he exclaims. 'If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there' (Psa. cxxxix. 7, 8). Thus, good or evil, He is always with us; strengthening and encouraging us in our resolutions to follow the path of righteousness—or wrestling and striving with us, to restore us to that path, if we have diverged from it. When our first parents had committed the sin which caused them to fall from their original purity and holiness, and they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, Adam and his wife *hid* themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden. But we do not find that they thus secured themselves from the embarrassment of that presence, for the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, 'Where art thou? Stand forth, thou that seekest to hide thyself from Me.' Again, when Moses, pleading for the people, spoke face to face with the Lord as a man speaketh unto his friend, the Lord said to him, 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest,'—whereupon Moses replied, 'If Thy presence go *not* with me, carry us not up hence' (Exod. xxxiii. 14, 15); thus showing how the wicked desire to be relieved from that, which is felt to be essential to the well-being and happiness of those who act righteously. 'For in Thy presence is fulness of joy' (Psa. xvi. 11).

As long as our Lord was upon the earth, He was present with His disciples; but that presence was of a kind which while it lasted was little appreciated, or at least far below its real value. We look upon those friends who walk beside us in the world, as though they would ever be by our side, and shrink from realizing a time when one of us must walk alone. But we well know that such a time must come. So also our Lord reminded His disciples that He would not always be at their side. 'The poor ye have always with you, but Me ye have not always,' He said to them, referring evidently to His bodily presence. But when that bodily presence was about really to be withdrawn, He substituted something far more precious, namely, His

spiritual aid ; and it was just as He was leaving them, after dwelling among them for so many years, that He gave them this legacy, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' Without this assurance, the disciples might well have been heart-broken, and spirit-broken, for if His bodily presence had brought with it danger, and peril, and perplexity, and difficulty—all these evils might be supposed to be increased by the withdrawal of His wise counsel and encouraging example ; if indeed His memory was to be kept alive, and His doctrines preached among a people hostile alike to both. But the assurance that He would be with them alway, was made to a wiser people—a company of earnest disciples purged from their gross conceptions by the fiery ordeal of trial and sorrow. They no longer looked upon Him with ignorant eyes of merely Jewish prejudice, but their eyes were opened that they should know Him—know Him as the Messiah—the Holy One of Israel—the Son of God—the Vanquisher of death—the Redeemer of mankind. And to them, therefore, this assurance had a special meaning, which none could deprive them of. No threats, no torments, no persecution, no difficulties raised by the evil machinations of their enemies, could ever overshadow the great fact that *He was with them alway* ; and this knowledge bore them triumphantly through every hardship, and every perplexity, and made them bold champions in the cause which He had entrusted to them.

Neither the Church nor mankind could exist unless His promise were true, that He would be with them alway. Churches and dispensations come to an end—not because He is no longer with them, but because they forsake Him ; and He establishes a new dispensation, and a new church out of the small remnants left by the old. But in an especial manner would He be with the dispensation He had personally established ; and with it He leaves also a personal promise, following immediately upon the declaration that 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.' He had personally breathed the Holy Spirit upon them, as an earnest of that great endowment which

was to follow His departure, and thus supply the loss of His personal presence. The circumstances accompanying the promise, the definiteness of the promise itself, and the unchangeableness and proved steadfastness of Him who made the promise, leave no place for doubt in the most timid of His disciples—not only that His Church is and will continue to be fostered by His unceasing presence and influence ; but that everyone, even the humblest of His true followers, may no less be sure of that support and encouragement in the hour of need, implied in the general and particular assurance, ‘ Lo, I am with you alway.’ For we have here to do with no broken reed—no merely crucified man, but with a risen Saviour—‘ the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning’ (Heb. xiii. 8).

## LECTURE XXXIII.

‘WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?’

‘What think ye of Christ?’—MATT. xxii. 42.

THIS is a question which is a source of no little controversy amid that section of humanity which is the flower of the civilized world, and which we term Christendom.

For to Christendom, at this era, belongs every nation which leads the way in civilization, in arts, in science, in benevolence, in justice. The Moslem barely survives, and only by the tolerance of Christian nations—the Hindoo bears gratefully the yoke of Christian rulers—and great heathen nations, who are unable to comprehend the reason, although, perchance, eaten up by ignorant vanity, are forced reluctantly, if tacitly, to admit that there are superior intelligences in the West, with whom they can cope in no respect, but in that of brute force.

And Christendom is the kingdom of Christ.

If this question were asked of different bodies of Christians, how varied would be their responses! There are some who—although not Christians, it is true, yet belong to the Christian world—like the Jews of old, still exclaim, with blinded understandings, ‘He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.’ These men are busy propagandists of the destruction of faith—but of such it is unnecessary to say more. Some, calling themselves by the name of Christ, would declare that He was their great Teacher—their good Example—sent to point out the way to heaven—sent to show man his capabilities and powers—sent to give man the knowledge of what was in

him, of the possibilities of his inner self, of the future destiny of his immortal soul. But with all this they would discern in Him no Divine character or essence. He is to them a *man*—simply a man, to whom the Divine Spirit has imparted so much of its inspiration as to make Him a *power*—to fill Him with the enthusiasm of humanity—so that His work on earth might result in the improvement of mankind, and the elevation of the human race. But, this work done, He, say they, reaps His reward as the first of men, the Teacher sent by God, who has faithfully fulfilled His mission—and no more.

But the majority would affirm that Christ was undoubtedly a Divine person. With the centurion of old they would exclaim, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God.’ They would maintain from Scripture the fact, as beyond dispute, that Christ was not a man like ourselves, but One who, in human form, was in partnership with the Divine—that He had a share in the Omnipotent rule of heaven—that He was one of Three, morally equal, but practically unequal—that He was of a more gracious nature than Jehovah—but at the same time subordinate to the Supreme One, on whom He confesses His dependence, and to whom He prays for succour and support. ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ say these—the great body of His followers at the present day—‘was a *man*, in whom was the power of God dwelling. He was a man who derived what was Divine in Him from God—in the same sense as we derive our life from Him. He was the Son of God, standing to God in the same relation as a son stands to a father, a relation of humility, obedience, and dutifulness, as to one who in all respects claimed superior authority and preëminent dominion—but never destined, like the sons of men, to step, in the fulness of time, into the vacated seat of that Father.’

Another body of Christians, a most extensive one, claims their Founder as Divine, but yet gives His earthly mother a first place. Not content with debarring Him from the succession of His Father, they represent Him as always a child in the maternal arms, and they teach their votaries that the wishes of

that mother are paramount with her Son, as though He were for ever an infant, whose weakness, though Divine, could only derive strength, as it derived subsistence, from the earthly mother, whom *His* divinity alone had ennobled and crowned !

Such, in brief, are some of the inconsistencies, the errors, the false and debasing views of Christ into which eighteen centuries of so-called Christianity have plunged the leading communities of mankind. Such are, in brief, the perverted beliefs which have been foisted upon mankind by His teachers who hold the Bible in their hands, and profess from the source and fountain of truth to draw, not pure water, but muddy streams of pernicious error—dishonouring to God and Christ, and at the same time depriving themselves, and mankind in general, of the vast privileges, the incalculable benefits, which Christ Himself contemplated, and which He came, in suffering and sorrow, to bring to His people. Prejudice, pride of intellect, love of power, and spiritual conceit, are the great causes of the maze and web of superficial and specious perversion which has befallen the clear precepts and the explicit statements of the Holy Word, and have enshrouded in a mist of fallacious obscurity that which, if permitted, would shine brightly as the sun at noonday.

But we have not so learned Christ. The Holy Scriptures declare that they testify of Him, and the strange dishonouring doctrines to which we have just alluded, do *not* form part of that testimony, are *not* found in the Sacred Word, but are the human perversions of truth accumulated by ignorance and error, and supported by what has been in too many cases self-interested priestcraft.

What then does the Bible really teach us about Jesus Christ? for to the Bible must be our final appeal. Where, it may be asked, in the Old Testament, do we hear aught of more than one Divine Person? If the Jews were anything, they were Monotheistic. In whatever else they may have been external, formal, and lifeless, as to religious faith, they at least had the one virtue, which kept them as a distinct people among the surrounding



idolatrous nations, of being worshippers of One God. With them there was no question of a division either of essence, or of fountain; Jehovah was to them the One great God of heaven and of earth—a God who would not by any means give His glory to another, but who, through His prophets, was continually repeating to a perverse and stubborn generation the great central fact, ‘Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord’ (Deut. vi. 4). Not only ‘Thou shalt have no other gods *before* Me,’—which might be construed as admitting the bare possibility of an inferior or subordinate Deity—but ‘I, even I, am He, and there is *no God with Me*’ (Deut. xxxii. 39). What can be plainer than this? What simplest intelligence is there that cannot comprehend this uncompromising statement? Here is no ambiguity—no room for the shadow of doubt; not only no limit of a co-equal and co-eternal Son, but a distinct denial of ANY share in the Divine Power or Essence.

Nor are these passages alone—they are reiterated again and again in the Old Testament—they are the burden of the prophet’s voice, and they were *necessary* in order to counteract the universal tendency to the worship of many gods by the nations around.

Is, then, the Old Testament in contradiction to the New? Were they the work of different minds, and written by different inspirations? As well ask, Is there order in Nature? Is the Universe chaos? It is impossible—and were it possible, the testimony of the New is expressly corroborative of the Old, ‘Think not that I am come,’ says our Saviour (Matt. v. 17), ‘to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.’ No; the New Testament is the corner-stone of the Old; the architecture is the same; there is—there can be—no contrariety or discrepancy between the two; and what is patent and clear in the one, must be also distinct and undoubted in the other. The Old Testament and the New are equally the Word of God in the *inspired* books; and the difference which seems to us to distinguish them is but the difference of the styles, which are adapted to the different con-

ditions of mankind at the period when they were respectively written. Mankind varies—God changes not; and as mankind changes, he approaches nearer, or separates himself further from God; and thus God's message must adapt itself to his condition, or it would never reach his heart, and would miss the end which God intended—and that it cannot do.

Our Lord Jesus Christ declares Himself in terms which cannot be mistaken; and only the insidious errors and falsities which have by degrees crept into the church, have clouded the clear and distinct enunciations which He has made concerning Himself. These errors have been sometimes of the simplest kind, and yet have borne a crop of falses which have changed the face of Christendom. They have sometimes been probably accidental, but the blind followers of authority, failing to go to the Word itself for correction, have themselves in turn become blind leaders of the blind, and have transformed the teaching, and marred the character of Christ, so that in time He has become no longer recognisable as the incarnate Word; the Saviour has been robbed of His glory, and those who should have been saved by Him, have thrust Him away as a man of like passions with themselves; and thus, by an insidious word here and there, great vital truths have been set aside, and doctrines of vast importance have been made of none effect; shipwreck has been made of faith, and men have, in this age, become guilty of the fearful blasphemy of preaching and writing scornful diatribes against their Saviour and Redeemer, and foul denials of their incarnate God.

It may be said, that it is true Jehovah declares Himself to be One in the Old Testament; but Jehovah was the Creator of all things. How could He be also the Redeemer of the New Covenant, or the Holy Spirit of the Apostolic Church? But He who was once One, could never be divided. A double or a triple Omnipotence or Omniscience is a contradiction of terms—an impossibility, and a logical absurdity. 'I will not give My glory to another,' He has said (Isa. xlii. 8). And yet that name by which we delight to remember the Lord Jesus

Christ, is one which Jehovah Himself claims as His own over and over again in the Old Testament. ‘I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy *Saviour* . . . . Thus saith the Lord, your *Redeemer*, the Holy One of Israel’ (Isa. xliii. 3-14). ‘There is no God else beside Me: a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me’ (Isa. xlv. 21). What can be more clear and unmistakable than this? He is God alone; He also is the Saviour and the Redeemer; ‘Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer’ (Isa. xlv. 24). For He who thus claims to be God alone—Saviour and Redeemer—He is not the God, the Saviour and Redeemer of the Old dispensation only. We have seen how He proclaims Himself the *only* God; and in the prophets He leaves no room for error or misapprehension, for He says, in Isaiah xliii. 11, ‘I, even I, am the Lord; and *beside Me there is no Saviour*.’ And the Prophet Hosea corroborates the Prophet Isaiah, saying (xiii. 4), ‘I am the Lord thy God, from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but Me; for *there is no Saviour* beside Me.’

To whom, then, was Jehovah speaking when He thus decisively announced Himself at once the only God—the only Saviour—the only Redeemer? To whom but to the Jews? and to whom did our Saviour manifest Himself, and declare Himself equal with God, but also to the same people—the Jews—His own—who received Him not? Can anyone imagine for a moment that the God who spoke by the prophets, and He who spoke by the Word, was antagonistic—the one usurping the authority, and claiming the Divinity of the other? Utterly impossible! even were there not other and overwhelming proofs of the identity of Christ with the Maker of all things. ‘Before Abraham was, *I am*,’ said Christ (John viii. 56); and here one of two things becomes absolutely certain. He who said this was God Himself, Jehovah; who said to Moses from the burning bush, when asked His name, ‘Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you’ (Exod. iii. 14); or (with reverence be it spoken) if not so, then must the Speaker have been the most daring and hardened

blasphemer who ever lived, and that which His bitterest enemies would shrink from designating Him.

The prophecies concerning the coming of Christ in a human form are not sparing of their indications of His divinity; and if of His divinity, then also of His *supreme* divinity. 'Behold,' says Isaiah (vii. 14), 'a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel;' that is, *God with us*—God walking with men. And in that grand verse (Isa. ix. 6) of evidently the same Child, it is said, 'His name shall be called *Wonderful!*' (that name which the angel of the Lord, to whom Manoaah offered a meat-offering, declared to be *His*). 'The Mighty God! the everlasting Father! the Prince of Peace!'

Almighty God! and Everlasting Father! These are the highest possible titles which Jehovah the Lord of Hosts can claim for Himself. 'The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this!' What! He who will not give His glory to another—He beside whom there is no God—*His* zeal shall thus endow *another* as the Mighty God! Monstrous and impossible contradiction! which only the short-sighted and puny prejudice of mankind can have conceived! The zeal of the Lord of Hosts is in the cause of humanity—the zeal of the Lord of Hosts is to lay aside His glory for a time and take our nature, in order that we, His created beings, might not perish—the zeal of the Lord of Hosts could not be a weak and vacillating folly, and yet there is no alternative between that and a mighty and divine plan of salvation for perishing sinners, dictated by infinite love, planned by infinite wisdom, announced by infinite compassion, and carried out by infinite power, infinite beneficence and infinite sacrifice.

And when in the fulness of time the prophecy was fulfilled, and the virgin received annunciation of her destiny from the angel, he said to her, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the *Son of God.*' And thus He who in prophecy was declared to be the Everlasting Father, became the *Son of God.*

Son of God, and Son of Man; He put aside for a time the glory and empire of His Godhead, descended from His heavenly throne in order to approach His creatures; and the Everlasting Father became the obedient Son; and not only so, but even as a man ‘He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man.’

He became also the Son of Man—a Son of our race—and in the highest sense the Son of Humanity. But as Son of God, and Son of Man, we have evidence that His was a two-fold nature. The devils knew Him as the *Son of God*—they recognised the Divine in Him. John bare record that He upon whom the Holy Ghost descended, was the Son of God. *He said*, I am the Son of God—‘Verily, verily I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live’ (John v. 25).

But the Son of Man had not where to lay his head—the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and *be killed*—the Son of Man must be *lifted up*—the Son of Man must be glorified by suffering, by the resistance of temptation, by the victory over sin; and thus finally the Son of Man must be made worthy to be blessed in a Divine co-partnership, and an indissoluble union with the Son of God.

The main source of the erroneous doctrine so universally taught in our churches, springs from the difficulty which is found in comprehending the relation between the Father and the Son. The Gospel so continually represents Christ as the Son, addressing an invisible Father, that, although when properly understood it is simplicity itself, it is not much to be wondered at, that when once any *authority* has constructed a gross idea upon this relationship, it has been seized upon by minds not easily capable of spiritual conceptions, and an edifice of error is erected which it is extremely difficult to overthrow. The Jews, who looked upon our Saviour as a man born among themselves, fiercely resented any assumption by Him of rela-

tionship to God ; and even His disciples very slowly took in the idea that He, who walked among themselves, who daily talked to them and taught in their synagogues—however much they might venerate Him—was really a Divine person. If they could seize the idea of His Divinity, then, with their monotheistic education, they could not fail to perceive that He was not *a* God, but *the* God—the Maker of heaven and earth. Those, who were endowed with prophetic insight saw it at once. Zacharias, as soon as his tongue was loosed, exclaimed, ‘Blessed be the Lord God of Israel ; for *He* hath visited and *redeemed* His people’ (Luke i. 68). The aged Simeon, taking the Child in his arms, saw it, and he blessed God, and said, ‘Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for *mine eyes have seen* Thy salvation’ (Luke ii. 29, 30). But it was not so with others. Christ declared Himself, in no ambiguous terms, over and over again ; but they could not take it into their understanding, and *never fully did*, until after His resurrection. The Apostles were fully persuaded of the fact, and St. Paul (Col. ii. 8, 9), contends against the very error alluded to, but which, in his day, had had scarcely time to develop itself. ‘Beware,’ (says he), ‘lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.’ What can be more precise and definite than this declaration ? But yet this is no more than Christ Himself declared, when He said, ‘I and My Father are one.’

Although our Saviour spoke in the symbolical relation of a Son to the Father of all things, yet He always claimed an equality—an equality, however, only somewhat qualified as long as He was a Man upon earth. ‘All things,’ He said (Matt. xi. 27), ‘are delivered unto Me of My Father : and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.’ And more explicitly is this stated just before His ascension, when He said, ‘All power is given to *Me* in heaven and in earth’



(Matt. xxviii. 18)—where no reference is made to the Father—for He was now Father and Son—a glorified, an eternal, and an infinite God-man. But for explicit declaration that He was Himself the Father, His words to Philip (John xiv. 6, 8, 9) are amply distinct. ‘Jesus saith, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by *Me*. Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known *Me*, Philip? he that hath seen *Me hath seen* the Father; and how sayest thou, Show us the Father?’

A statement so explicit as this is utterly incontrovertible. Those who would assert that Christ was not Divine, thereby accuse Him of falsehood, and of even worse crimes, unless they salve their own consciences by setting aside the Scriptures, and flatter themselves with the belief that the words here quoted, and all the rest of the priceless words of the beloved disciple, are incredible forgeries. Those, on the other hand, who, by the light of Divine Truth, can comprehend the deep verities of the Gospel of St. John, know that it would be the strangest thing in the history of literature if that Gospel should be spurious—far, far more strange than that it should be true; for in it are enclosed the brightest gems which dropped from our Saviour’s mouth—the key to His Divine nature, which fits accurately all the complicated wards of the Old Testament and Apocalyptic books, and without which many difficulties would remain, not perhaps insuperable, but such as would act as hindrances to the reception of truth in hosts of believing hearts.

For we are not left in doubt as to the truth of the words. The old dispensation, we have seen, amply bears out the claims of Christ to our worship as the mighty God, and everlasting Father; and the Apocalyptic vision of St. John clinches the authority of the Divine words: ‘Thus saith Jehovah the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the Lord of Hosts, *I am the first, and I am the last*, and beside Me there is no God’ (Isa. xlv. 6); and when John saw one like the Son of Man sitting in the

midst of the seven candlesticks, He laid His right hand upon him and said, 'I am the first and the last : I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore' (Rev. i. 17, 18).

But if Christ was in the Father, and the Father in Christ ; if the Father and the Son are *one*, whence is that notion that they are distinct persons—three persons and one God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Church of England, as we are aware, continually uses this expression, and declares that this Divine Trinity is a *mystery*, beyond our comprehension, inasmuch as we cannot realize the existence of *three persons* which make together *one person*. True, we cannot, and the attempt is hopeless and futile ; but why should we make the attempt ? Are we called upon to do so ? Where in Scripture is the authority for our so doing ?

There is but one so-called authority—an authority which, on reference to the original version, ceases to exist. In Hebrews i. 1-3 we read : ' God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by (His) Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds ; who being the brightness of (His) glory, and the express image of His *person*, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.'

Here, then, it is said that Christ has sat down at the right hand of God in the express image of His *person*. The Greek word ὑποστασις, however, does not mean *person* in this sense at all ; it is an incorrect translation, giving probably the idea or prejudice of the translators, and conveying an erroneous impression. It ought to be translated *substance*, and not *person* ; and it means, that the ' Son, or the Divine Humanity of the Lord, is the express image, or manifestation as to form, of the substance of the invisible God.' (*See Revised Version.*)

In the Athanasian Creed this term is applied to each of the three manifestations of the Divine nature—the Father, the Son,

and the Holy Spirit ; whereas, in this passage, the Apostle uses it in reference to the Father alone, and hence the confusion ; and thus the supporters of the doctrine of *three persons* rest upon a reed, and a reed which is rotten and unsound

Again, the prayers of the Church of England almost universally terminate in a form of words, at once unscriptural and superfluous, ‘We ask these things, these blessings, this pardon, *for Christ’s sake.*’ If Christ is God the Father, to whom we address our supplication, why do we ask these mercies for Christ’s sake ? What authority have we in the Scriptures for this form of prayer, so universal among Christians ? In Ephes. iv. 32 we read, ‘And be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted and forgiving one another, even as God *for Christ’s sake* hath forgiven you.’ Here then is the authority. And yet, will it be believed that this is the only passage in our Bibles in which such an expression is used ; and moreover, that this one passage is an obvious mis-translation, corrected in the Revised Version ? The original reads, not God for Christ’s sake, but simply as *God, in Christ,* has forgiven you. And, indeed, this is in strict accordance with another passage too often overlooked, where God expressly announces that He is not an angry God, forgiving only for the sake, and at the intervention of another—but ‘I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for *Mine own sake*, and will not remember thy sins’ (Isa. xliii. 25).

How different, this ; and how baseless the conclusions drawn from an erroneous passage, which seems first to have made its appearance in Tyndal’s translation of the Bible, and to have been copied from one to another—sometimes with a marginal correction, and sometimes without, until the present time !

We have so far spoken only of the Father and the Son, to show that they are *one*, in the person of Jesus Christ. In conclusion, we will make a few remarks upon the Holy Spirit, which those who uphold the doctrine of *three persons*, believe to be co-equal with the other two, as well as a distinct person of the Divine Trinity.

But surely it requires but a small examination of the Sacred

Scriptures to perceive that the Holy Spirit signified, not another and a third *person*, but was simply the Divine operation, or proceeding, from Jesus Christ glorified.

Nowhere is the Holy Spirit described either as person or ὑποστάσις (substance) but, in John xx. 22 we read that when our Lord imparted the Holy Spirit to His disciples *after His resurrection*, ‘*He breathed on them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.’ Here the Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, or holy breath, spirit, or ghost as it is translated, seems *really* to have been breath—the Divine afflatus, but only that of the glorified Redeemer. Although, indeed, the term Holy Spirit is used two or three times in the Old Testament (as in Psa. li. 11), ‘Take not thy Holy Spirit from me,’ it is obvious that it is used in a somewhat different sense from the New Testament expression. And although the New Testament repeatedly uses the term, it is evident that it there had an express and definite meaning which it had not in the Old. Indeed, our Lord repeatedly *promises* it at a future time; and it was something dependent upon His own glorification and departure from earth; and in John vii. 39, we are definitely told that although the Holy Spirit was to be given to those who believed—yet at that time ‘the Holy Spirit *was not yet*’ (given, being added in our Version), ‘because that Jesus was not yet glorified.’

And the Apostle Paul leaves no room for dispute, when (in 2 Cor. iii. 17), after speaking of the ministrations of the Spirit (ver. 8), he goes on to say, ‘Now *the Lord* is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.’

How then can it possibly be maintained that the Holy Spirit is intended to convey the idea of a definite personality, distinct alike from God the Father and God the Son? co-equal with them, and having a special and independent *rôle* to perform?

No; the Holy Spirit is what its name indicates—the spirit or operation of the Divine Being—the influence proceeding from Him—the Comforter to support us in the hour of trial and temptation—the Spirit of Truth to guide us in the way which leads to Eternal Life.

Thus do we perceive that the teaching of Scripture is plain upon all these questions, and offers no support to the common and erroneous doctrines of a distinction of persons in the Divine Trinity, or of the personality of the Holy Spirit. The limits of these Lectures render it impossible to proceed further with explanations as to our Saviour’s relations to His Father ; but enough has been said to prove that His claim to equality with the Father was supported by the prophets of old, and by the subsequent Apocalyptic vision of St. John. The Lord, by assuming our nature, became, as to His humanity, weak and infirm, like other men. He was the *Word* made flesh, which dwelt among us ; but the flesh is weak, and in that state of weakness as to His human body he addressed the Father, the Divinity dwelling in Him ; but His glorification being consummated by the completion of His conquest over sin and death, He no longer felt or spoke of any separation between His Divinity and His humanity, but said, ‘ All power is given to *Me* in heaven and in earth.’ For now was He, not only as He had ever been, the Mighty God, but also the *Divine Man*, conjoined to His creatures by a community of nature—‘ a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens . . not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin ’ (Heb. iv. 14, 15).

God—all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—was in Christ, reconciling the world unto *Himself*—who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—who is the Resurrection and the Life—whose words are Spirit and Life. ‘ Jesus Christ—this is the true God, and Eternal Life ’ (1 John v. 20).

THE END.



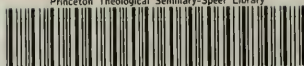








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